

THE LONDON READER

of Literature, Science, Art, and General Information.

[ALL RIGHTS RESERVED.]

No. 1778.—VOL. LXIX.]

FOR THE WEEK ENDING MAY 29, 1897.

[PRICE ONE PENNY.]



"I DON'T THINK YOU COULD WOUND ME BY ANY WORD YOU MIGHT UTTER," KEITH SAID, QUIETLY.

HIS FIRST AND ONLY LOVE.

[A NOVELETTE.]

CHAPTER I.

"It is a shame—a detestable shame—unjust, ungentlemanly! and if I ever meet that editor of the *West End Review* I'll tell him so!"

And Dr. Laurie Greenfell threw down the paper with an energy that sent the poor thing scudding across the breakfast-table, finally alighting on the back of her pet St. Bernard, who looked up in some astonishment thereat.

"What is the matter! What in the world is the matter, my dear!" said her brother, laying down the *Times*, and looking with an expression of astonishment at his handsome sister, whose soft cheek was quite flushed, and in whose eyes there were positively tears; yes, tears, whether of vexa-

tion or wounded feeling he was quite unable to divine.

She had risen, and went and stood by the window, perhaps feeling that she had allowed herself to be too wounded by a "stupid article, written by some ignoramus," she said; but poor Dr. Laurie threw herself so heart and soul into her profession—loved it with so real an enthusiasm—that it hurt her dreadfully to have it "slashed into," as a woman's calling.

She saw nothing unwomanly at all in using the brains of an almost masculine strength, and the talents Heaven had given her, in following the bent of those talents, and in succouring poor humanity.

"They are jealous," she said; "that's why they can't bear to see us women as physicians."

No one could say that Laurie Greenfell had lost anything of the sweet womanliness of face or mien or character by adopting this profession, for she had the charm of beauty and a rare grace; and if she bore herself with a more independent carriage—that "something" which marks, very

surely, the man or woman who is a power in the world—surely that was no disadvantage to her, and no one ever thought it was.

Yet when this slim, graceful woman, who barely looked her twenty-eight years, with her rich, dusky complexion; her large, dark eyes, and masses of short, silky hair; her white delicate, yet nervously strong-looking hands; her bright, vivacious manner, and constant play of feature; when this lady, I say, was pointed out at concert or opera—at public meetings, or scientific lecture as "Dr. Greenfell, the lady physician, you know, who has such a practice, and actually gives lectures to lady students. Oh! and speaks in public, &c.," there would be a start, an astonished look, an incredulous smile, and a "No, surely! why she does not look a bit that sort of woman." As if "that sort of woman" were a species of monster.

And men never failed to say,—

"By Jove! she is a beautiful creature!"

And women,—

"My dear, how beautifully she is dressed!"

Quite in the fashion, and no eccentricities at all!"

Dr. Laurie kept her eccentricities, if eccentricities they be, for her actions, not her dress.

She had a splendid practice, chiefly—with the exception of one hospital she attended, where, being either more liberal, or more shorthanded, they were glad of her services—women and children; and how the children loved her!

And she numbered among her patients very many members of the Upper Ten—for Miss Greenfell had good connections and many social advantages which helped to push her forward; and though she had had obstacles to surmount, and still was, by many of her own profession, tolerated simply because her powerful intellect compelled them to allow her standing room, she had battled manfully with all; and now, at eight-and-twenty, held one of the highest positions in the medical world to which a lady is suffered to aspire.

But Dr. Greenfell did not escape the customary fate of people who do anything unusual, and she had to endure misconception and the fire of adverse criticism, and it afforded her great amusement, for she had high spirits enough for ten men, and had long ago got used to censure and imputations of all sorts of motives—to being called unfeminine, bold, everything.

"I practice my profession," she used to say, serenely, "and make a good income from it. I have started my eldest nephew in life, and my patients find no fault with me. My looks find favour, and I think I make a better woman than some men I know."

Occasionally, however, Dr. Laurie got out of patience with the hackneyed objections, and the old charge of stepping out of a woman's sphere, &c.

"No one thinks it unwomanly to be a nurse," she said on this particular morning to her brother, who had looked in to have some breakfast with the sister, that being the only time to catch the busy physician, he declared; "and a trained nurse has to go through and see a great deal which this flimsy editor thinks so 'unwomanly.' And the man writes so cleverly too! It's all the more pity he should be such a fool."

"My dear Laurie," said her brother, laughing, "why, I never saw you so put out before. What is it all?"

"Oh, only an article; at least, a sort of notice of that lecture I gave last week at the Institute. He does me the grace to say I am clever and mean well, but deprecates that so charming a lady can so step out of her sphere as to appear on a public platform and lecture to a lot of students—medical students. 'And we all know what they are,' says my kind censor. And then later he ridicules the notion of women ever doing anything as doctors, and says 'that with all deference to our pioneer—to whom as a woman we would gladly bend the knee, but whom as a public character we dare to criticize—we should be sorry to trust our broken limbs to her skill, or to that of any of her charming sisters.' Charming," said Laurie, giving the paper a shove with her pretty foot. "How I hate the very word. It's made a symbol of all that's useless and stupid and aimless."

"Good gracious, Laurie, dear!" said her brother. "My dear, I don't want you to be anything but charming, I'm sure. And I don't think you ever advocated women being surgeons, did you?"

"Certainly not, except for children. Perhaps, as a rule, they haven't the physical strength required. I am exceptionally strong, but I wouldn't have attempted if I had cared for that branch—the setting of limbs or operations—except in certain cases. But I know all about it, and could set an arm or amputate a leg, if in an emergency, with the best of them;" at which speech Mr. Greenfell burst out laughing so heartily that the young physician was obliged to laugh too. And then she sat down again and deigned to look at her coffee.

"But it does make me very angry sometimes," she said, half-laughing still. "It is such a senseless outcry, and so unfair. Half the people who run down lady doctors as unfeminine and coarse-minded have never met one of these dreadful

creatures in their lives, and draw on their imaginations for all their particulars. I should like to get up a discussion with that editor," said Dr. Greenfell, peculiarly.

"I've no doubt you would, my dear," replied her brother, laughing at her, admiring her immensely the while—he was one of the sister worshipping order of brothers, and what dear creatures these are! "And I daresay you'd get the best of it, even with that clever fellow, the editor of the *West-End Review*."

"Who is he? Do you know, Edgar?"

"Why I thought you knew, dear. You who mix up with all the world. Keith Montrose, to be sure."

"Keith Montrose!" cried Laurie, opening her great eyes. "What, the man who writes those delicious, breezy, clever books? Oh! I am disappointed; I thought he had more sense."

"Feminine jumping to conclusions, my dear," said Edgar, passing his cup for some coffee. "You see you are a little bit of a woman after all; and let me tell you ma'am, or doctor, rather, this same Montrose is very handsome, so if you should meet him don't fall in love, for he won't tolerate a doctor wife."

Laurie laughed in great scorn.

"Don't be afraid," said she. "I've no time to fall in love, and wouldn't marry anyone with such notions as he's got, so don't be uneasy."

"Ah! my dear, bide a bit, your time will come yet!" said Edgar shaking his head wisely. "You're not too clever to give your heart away some day."

"I've given it already," said Doctor Laurie, saucily. "My patients and my work have it, and I've got a nice sweetheart—poor little mite—in a decline, and he's got a complication of disease, too. I had a piece of fun about that, though," said Laurie, breaking into a smile. "You know Dr. Page, who has all along been so inimical to me? Well, the other day Lady Woodside said she should like to call in another opinion about her boy. Of course I was happy, and she called in this very doctor; and, you know, he had to say that everything was being done that could be done, and that he could not suggest anything further. 'In fact,' he added, 'Miss Greenfell (he won't call me doctor) has prolonged the child's life beyond what would have seemed possible to me.' He is not ungenerous, you see."

"What a triumph for you!" said Edgar, proudly. "Wait awhile, Laurie, you'll gain the day yet."

"I mean to," said the young physician, with a quiet consciousness of power. "But ah! Edgar, how I long for the time when all these petty jealousies and opposition shall cease—when we shall be looked on as fellow-workers, equals in certain spheres, with all who are doing their best to lighten human suffering. If they would only credit us at least with pure motives! 'Tis that that hurts me, that makes"—she stopped abruptly, bit her lip, and brushed her hand impatiently over her eyes, got up abruptly, and walked away to the window again.

Dr. Laurie had certainly a masculine hatred of displaying any feminine weakness.

"I didn't think I was so stupid," she muttered, presently, and returning to her place, said, smiling, "the fact is I want a change. I'm getting a perfect woman!" and she laughed merrily.

"Just what I was thinking, my dear," said Edgar, eagerly, "and, in truth, what I came over to talk to you about."

"Oh, there now!" cried Laurie, putting out her hands, "that is just like you—you are so painfully practical. I say a thing half in joke, and you want to pin me to it. I know exactly who's put you up to that nonsense."

"Ellen, of course. I'm not ashamed to be put up to anything by my wife," said Edgar, stoutly. "She says—and truly—you're looking fagged and pale, and you ought to take a holiday."

"All very fine, Mr. Greenfell, but what is to become of my people?"

"Nonsense! Get someone to take them for you. Dr. A—will, I know, if you won't trust a man," said Edgar, who was fabled of having a

ely joke at the ladies. "It is just like you doctors," and he smashed an egg-shell viciously. "You're for ever preaching to others about change of air, but get you to swallow your own theories! Do it if you can!"

"Anything more, dear?" said Doctor Laurie, with great meekness.

"Yes, a lot more; you go visiting about from patient to patient, lecture, or read and write, and never have a moment's rest or relaxation."

"You bad boy! Didn't I go to the Philharmonic with you two weeks ago?"

"Yes, and passionately fond of music as you are, a precious job I had to get you there. No, but I am serious, Laurie,"—for Laurie here betrayed the greatest inclination to laugh. "You'll be ill if you don't."

"My pulse, as yours, doth temperately keep time," quoted the doctor, provokingly laying her finger on her wrist. "Ah, my dear boy, you see, I can tell exactly how I stand."

"Not at all," replied Edgar, staunchly. "No physician ever prescribes for himself, and I believe in your secret heart you know I'm speaking truth."

"What in the world is all this sudden scare about?" said Laurie, meanly shirking the question. "Let me look at myself. No, I'm not a skeleton yet, and I eat and drink, and sleep pretty well. Now, do look here, Eddie, and our grave and intellectual young doctor knelt down, and, with true feminine coaxing, put her soft cheek against her brother's. "Do be a reasonable creature. I've got to take the chair at a meeting of the St. John's Nursing Society next week. I've got to lecture at the Institute to the lady students—that's on the 25th. I've got proofs of my book on the treatment of brain disease coming in. I've got—"

"There; that'll do. No, I won't, I shan't listen to any more," cried Edgar, stopping his ears. "Good gracious! as if that isn't enough to knock up any woman or man, for there's writing besides, and all these things to prepare. And that brain of yours is never still—never! Have your proofs sent down to you if you must, get someone else to take the chair for you, and come up for the lecture. Why you want to be giving it, I don't know; you don't get a cent by it."

A slight colour crossed the girl's cheek, but she answered brightly,—

"Oh! I do that because I like it; and we poor women have so few opportunities, even now, for help in studying medicine."

"Let 'em go to Zurich or Paris, as you did," grumbled Edgar. "But you're not going to get off so. Promise me you'll take at least a month out of town."

"A month! Oh! I couldn't," exclaimed Laurie, springing up. "How thankful I am I'm single, and can do as I like! I shouldn't be happy away for so long."

"You would. Now listen. You'll go down to some quiet place on the coast, and just rest; amuse yourself practising your music instead of your medicine. And if you like, Ellen and I will run down and see you every Sunday. Now, won't that be charming?"

Laurie stood musingly, with her finely-moulded chin on her hand. She looked exceedingly pretty, thought Edgar, in this attitude—there was a half smile on her lips, too—and he fancied he read signs of a surrender at discretion.

"Come; hesitate, and you're lost, bonnie sister," said he, taking her face between his hands. "Say yes."

"Well, I own it would be very pleasant," said Laurie, laughing, and rimping up her short thick curls, "but I really don't know. I must think it over, and see how I can manage. But supposing I do? Couldn't you get away, and Ellen, and the chicks, too? I'll make it all square."

Her brother kissed the upturned face fondly.

"I know you would do anything but take care of yourself, dear child," he said, softly. "But even if I could allow you to burden yourself, I am afraid we could not manage it very well. I can't possibly get away from town for a long time, and the children don't have their holidays yet, you know."

"The carriage, miss" said a servant, entering at this moment.

"Why, is it so late?" said Laurie, astonished. "Thanks, Martha, I'm coming." Then as the housemaid retired, she said, "Now I must be off to my patients, dear; and I'll think over your plan as I go. I will, religiously, although I haven't any religion, Mr. Montrose says. I can give you a lift, too. I'll be ready in a trice."

And away sprang the young physician, and in less than five minutes re-appeared in a grey-plumed hat, and signified that she was ready.

"I shall call in to-night on my way home from the office, Laurie," said Edgar, as the elegantly-appointed brougham stopped at her first house of call in Cavendish-square—she had a house in Upper Berkeley-street—"and settle everything."

"No use, dear," said she, her hand on the knocker, "I shall be out to dinner at the Samaritan Hospital; four ladies had the temerity to accept."

"Oh! bother your dinners and your lectures. Good-bye; I'll come to breakfast again to-morrow," and he went off, just hearing the voice of the footman who opened the door, and who said cheerfully to the young lady,—

"Good-morning, doctor; my lady's better this morning."

"Doctor!" muttered he, laughing; "It sounds a little odd, too. She's a rare jewel, that sister-of-mine. That'll be a happy man who wins her, if she is to be won."

CHAPTER II.

"At the assemblage of notabilities we must not forget to remark that four ladies of the modern *cultus* of Esculapius assisted, and that the famous Laurie Greenfell, M.D., &c., made a speech which was much applauded, nothing daunted by the fact that she arose nearly alone to speak to a mixed auditory, a great part of which was composed of medical students."

And having written so far the editor of the *West End Review* laid his pen down, leaned his handsome head on his hand, and then pushed the said hand, with a movement of impatience, through his hair.

"These women!" he muttered. "The rage for the present day is for notoriety, no matter how gained! How her brother could let her—"

It is never defined what vague power brothers, in the male mind, are supposed to hold over their sisters.

It was the editor's room in which sat the writer of these articles, which so much wounded Dr. Laurie Greenfell—a large apartment furnished with that mixture of the business and the luxurious which appertains to the offices of young editors who are literary "swells," who are as much at home in the *salons* as in offices, and unite in their persons the two worlds of Paris and Bohemia.

Thick carpets on the floor, thick curtains before the door, a luxurious lounging chair pushed back now near the fireplace, the grate of which said fireplace was full of papers; for Mr. Montrose as often threw his waste correspondence into the fireplace or on the floor as into its proper receptacle, the waste paper basket.

His own writing table was as firm as a rock; heaps of papers, MSS., proofs, letters, &c., surrounded like a sea the island of inkstand. And yet Montrose would have told you that here was an order of its own and his own! No one else saw any.

There were also theatre and concert tickets lying about, with photographs and newspaper-cuttings, and all the nameless litter of a literary man's rooms.

And in the midst of all sat the handsome editor at this minute, now pushing his shapely hand through his dark curls, now pulling the drooping moustache, still with the dissatisfied expression on brow and lip which the inscribing of his sentiments had called up.

Keith Montrose was an unusually clever man; indeed, a good deal more than merely "clever." He was already, though young, well known not

only in the literary world, where his talents, and also the advantages of birth, ton, and friends had won him a high position, but also to that larger public which knows a man only through his works.

He was a man also of wide sympathies and views; but he had, as we all have more or less, his little bundle of prejudices; and the modern improvements of women, aspiring to a wider sphere for their abilities than the hearth and the work-basket, was one of his strongest pet prejudices. Not that he liked or admired a mere "housewife." He liked, as do most literary men, a clever well-read, well-informed woman; nor did he find anything repugnant to his taste in a woman following any artistic calling.

But a lady doctor was his *bête noir*. She could not possibly preserve through the studies necessary to make a doctor that crystal purity of soul, or that sweet softness of womanhood, which is a woman's charm and heritage. If she remained still a woman, then she must be unfit for a doctor; if an excellent doctor, then the edge of her womanhood must be rubbed off.

It was no use to represent to this young man, who, like most of us in our pet theories, was some what opinionated on the point, that it has never been proved that trained nurses are less women than nurses; that ambulance nurses become hardened or coarse, because of the nature of their duties. He had a hundred arguments to bring forward about the difference in the two callings; and to a certain extent he was right.

And then Dr. Laurie Greenfell, whom he had never met nor, as chance had it, seen, spoke at public meetings; and Keith Montrose, who saw no harm in a woman speaking the thoughts of others on a platform, had the strongest possible objection to her speaking her own thoughts.

"What, Montrose!" a cheery voice broke in upon the musings of the young *libérateur*. "You positively idling! Is the world coming to an end then, or what?"

And in came lounging, with his hands in his pockets, a theatrical critic, not famed for his absolute diligence in business, and threw himself into the armchair, taking up the concluding slip of Keith's summary. "Hallo! slashing into the women again, and you such a cavalier! For shame, Montrose!"

"I only slash into women who, to a great extent, forfeit the rights of their sex," answered Keith, lazily leaning back and crossing his arms behind his head.

"Yet, you know, this Dr. Greenfell is really not a mannish woman. I've seen her; she dresses just like any other woman, and is quite a beauty."

"More's the pity," said Keith, drily, shrugging his shoulders; "it's bad enough to have a hideous, ill-dressed woman running about doing a man's work badly; but when a woman is pretty, and dresses well, it is a positive fraud."

"And yet, you know," remarked Jack Larpent, laughing; "I've heard you come down on those women because these employments often make them forget the little feminine niceties, &c."

"Oh! pooh," returned Montrose, getting up with a half-yawn; "I hate the whole lot of them. Heaven defend me from such a woman for my wife, be she ill or well-dressed, pretty or ugly—don't argue, for pity's sake, *mon cher*, I'm done to death."

"You must go away, Montrose, you work too hard."

"Can't, *mon cher*, till the season's over. I've got to go down to—in a week or two, anyhow; when I return I'll see about getting off. By the way, do you know Edgar Greenfell at all?"

"Edgar Greenfell—I've seen him and his wife—yes, I met him one night at a *soirée*. Why?"

"Only I wondered what sort of a fellow he was," answered Keith, lighting a cigar. "Does he like his sister going in for all these new-fangled woman's rights?"

"Lord, yes, I suppose so—I think he's proud of her," said Larpent, laughing; "and if he didn't, I don't imagine our doctor would pay much attention to him."

"Why, no," said Montrose, drily; "it is part of the platform of these ladies to be superior to

all home restraints—the wishes of father, brother or husband go equally for nothing."

"Well, you know I don't care for these lady doctors as a rule, but, really, this Miss Greenfell seems an exception to the rule—they say she is quite all that a lady should be, and wonderfully clever."

"Perverved ingenuity!" said Montrose; "she may be better than most of her shrieking sisterhood—but, well, you know my opinions—I should like neither to have her for wife or doctor. If one broke an arm, ten to one she'd set it the wrong way."

"Now you are jesting—besides, she does not go in for surgery."

"Her studies must have included surgery, and every doctor is supposed to be able to do these ordinary bone settings. How any woman of refined mind can go through with such studies is a mystery to me. But I suppose the original refinement is always lacking in these men-women," said Mr. Montrose, charitably. "I wonder if such a woman can love?"

"A metaphysical question!" I am not qualified to answer," laughed Jack. "Try her, bring the battery of your *beaux yeux* and your sweet speeches to bear, and see."

"Nay, if by evil chance I could possibly fall in love with such a woman I should quarrel with her in two months, for I should never let my wife pose before an admiring world as Mrs. Doctor Montrose."

"But perhaps she would forsake all for sake of your *beaux yeux*," suggested Jack, knocking the ashes from his cigar.

"Not she. Was there ever the woman created who could be satisfied to exchange the homage of the many for the love of one—the notoriety of doing something out of the way for the humdrum doing as others do? she has probably even lost the capability of caring for the exchange."

"Hem! well I don't know; you go deeper into these things than I do," said Larpent, rising. "Well, I must be off, here comes your boy down with proofs. What a lot of work you make for yourself, Montrose, why must you see your own proofs?"

"Proofs!" said Keith, as he took the little roll from the boy and sat down again, "of course I shouldn't be happy unless I saw them. Are you off? Well, ta, ta, I shall look in for the new piece at the Comique to-night, sure to be bosh, but one must see it."

"Good-bye, old fellow, don't cut up that poor young doctor too awfully, it would be awkward you know," said Jack, maliciously, popping his head in at the door for a final shot. "If you ever went and fell in love with her."

"Fall in love with a physis bottle! *after elle, méchant*," cried Keith, laughing, and he bent over his work again.

CHAPTER III.

EDGAR GREENFELL carried his point; he fondly thought it was all his doing, but in fact if Miss Laurie had not felt herself that she wanted a holiday all his perseverance would not have induced her to give up her duties to other hands.

However, whatever the motive power, behold the young physician settled for three weeks or a month at a pretty little villa at Moulton-on-Sen, a quiet place as yet, not too far from London to enable Laurie to run up if anything particular called her.

"I am charmingly situated," she wrote up to her brother; "the sea is in front, and at the end of a long garden at the back the railway runs; the station is some little way below the town, the air here is delicious, and I am going to enjoy myself very much, especially when you come down, and at present I haven't some across any sick person to doctor, or any broken limbs to mend. If there were many such here they would be very badly off, for there is only one doctor resident, and I don't fancy he is up to much."

When the good people of Moulton read in the visitors' list of the *Moulton Express* of Dr. Laurie Greenfell, Linden Villa, they were puzzled beyond measure, for they never saw any male being come or go from that house, only the tall lithe form of

the beautiful young lady, who must certainly, they said, be the doctor's wife or daughter; no doubt she had come down first and he would join her. Curiosity reached a high pitch, and one day the keeper of the circulating library remarked, smiling to Laurie, who was choosing a book,—

"You must be lonesome, miss, all alone at the house; isn't the doctor coming down to you soon?"

Laurie knew perfectly well what the good lady was driving at, and she was much amused.

"The doctor's down, Mrs. Anderson," said she, opening her dark eyes, the delicate lips just giving a little with laughter, "didn't you know that?"

"Lord, miss, now is he? why I didn't know nothing about it; you'll like your name to go in the paper next week, won't you?"

"My dear, good woman, my name's there," said Laurie, taking down "Madcap Violet."

"Is it, miss?" the woman looked doubtful, but did not like to contradict. "I—I beg your pardon, miss, but there must be some mistake."

"No, none at all—Dr. Laurie Greenfell."

"But, miss—"

"But, my dear woman," Laurie fairly laughed now, "do you mean to say you never heard of a lady physician?"

"Lor, miss—doctor, I mean—why," ejaculated the woman, "you don't mean to say you're one o' they lady doctors—to think o' that now."

And it speedily spread all over the place, and Laurie was stared at unmercifully, and some of the prim residents thought she must be a dreadful character. Though they never could find her out in anything more dreadful than walking down on the beach late at night with her dog.

The resident doctor looked askance at her, and gave it as his opinion that she was very pretty; but "these women doctors, my dear madam, never trust them when anything more than a bread pill is called for."

Poor Mr. Haly, whom no one thought of calling in for anything more serious than a bad cold or a bilious attack!

One night Laurie came in from the beach, about eleven, and having taken her usual draught of milk, bade good night to her housekeeper, whistled to Hubert, her dog, and feeling a little tired, went upstairs to her room, whither the dog followed her, according to his custom.

But Laurie did not even begin to undress; she went and stood by the window which looked out on the sea, just to have a farewell glance, she said; but the sight of those mournfully heaving waters, gleaming silvery bright now and then under the fitful light of a pale moon, tempted her, and she stood there watching the waves tumbling in with that fascination which never permits us to weary of the sight.

Twelve o'clock rolled out from the church clock, and Laurie half-smiled as she listened. She had made many good resolutions of always retiring early, and this was how she fulfilled them.

"The express is just due," she thought, "and there they are shunting that goods train, what a terrible noise they make. Well, I really must begin to undress. But what is that? Ah, Great Heaven!" she sprang forward and flung open the door, listening.

There awoke on her ears a terrific crash, the cry of human creatures in agony and terror.

With the promptness of action that nature as well as training had made a necessity to Laurie she did not wait to hear more, but ran lightly downstairs.

Martha put her head out of her room with a scared face.

"Did you hear that, miss? Lor, it took my head off nearly," she whispered.

"I'm afraid there's an accident. I'm going down," said Laurie quickly, without stopping, and she bounded away like a deer, and ran down the garden.

Lights were flashing, voices shouting, shrieks and groans resounding, not two hundred yards from her house, which stood alone, a little way out of the town.

No need to look far to see where the accident had occurred; people were already hurrying down the road towards the scene, and Laurie, used as she was to sights of sickness and death, shivered and grew white as those awful cries for help came to her.

In a field hard by Linden Villa the huge engine lay on its side; it had ploughed up the ground for a score of yards before rolling over, and the hissing of the scalding water as it washed over the fire, the showers of sparks and bits of burning wood cast up, added confusion to a scene more horrible than any she had ever yet looked on.

Three carriages had gone off the line, the rest of the train stood yet on the rails, but the embankment was alive with people, some helping as best they could to get out from the wreck those who were injured or dead; women were shrieking and calling on husbands and fathers and children, and for one second Laurie stood appalled at the sight—there seemed no beginning to be made.

"You'd better go back, miss," said a porter, flashing the light of a lantern on her, as he stepped about among a confused mass of broken timber, cushion wraps, human beings all mingled in an almost undistinguishable heap; "what can you do?"

"A great deal," said Laurie, promptly. "I'm a doctor, and I am strong. I can help you to lift this," and she put words into action, and with a strength that amazed the man even in this moment helped him to lift a heavy spar from the bodies of two passengers, who were crushed beneath its weight.

"My house is there, Linden Villa," Laurie said, rapidly. "It is open for anyone remember, and I can attend to anyone."

She was everywhere that disastrous night; that slender, brave woman, sitting about with her strong white hands helping to move weights, or lay a soothing hand on some sufferer's brow, with her clear, hopeful voice, that encouraged the men to what might have seemed superhuman tasks; that gave patience to those crying out they were crushed—they should die if that weight was not removed quickly.

She never got tired, seemingly, or disheartened, and had her clear, concise directions ready where confusion reigned.

"I wonder you don't get sick, miss," the stationmaster said to her as she was bending over a form frightfully crushed, trying to bring back the life she feared had fled. "It makes me faint-like, and I'm a man."

"Faint!" Laurie said, looking up, and there was no contempt or superiority in her dear, sweet tones. "Oh, no! There is too much to be done. I understand you, though. Here, take a little of this brandy; it will do you good, and then we must work on."

And her words and her bright brave way cheered him on, and gave him more nerve than the brandy.

Later, when a faint streak of grey heralded the dawn, the inspector came to her, and said,—

"I think everybody's out, miss, now. It isn't so bad as we thought at first; only six killed and about forty injured. They've taken some to your house, miss; those who are very bad have been taken to the hotel. Could you go and see to them at your house, miss? There's two doctors from Holme, besides Mr. Haly, up at the hotel."

"I'll go," said the girl, lifting herself. "How did it happen?" she asked, as the man walked beside her towards the villa, his way being the same as hers for a few yards.

"They was shunting some goods trucks, miss," he answered, "and they were a little behind time, and the express she came tearing round that point there too late to stop her. It's a mercy the whole train didn't go over. The coupling-chain broke after the third carriage—that was a first-class—and so saved the rest."

"It's a mercy every train doesn't go off," said Dr. Laurie, dryly, "considering how you shunt goods about four minutes before the express is due. However, that's not your fault. Good day. Let me know if anything is wanted, and make use of me or my house."

"Thank you, kindly. That girl is a real trump!" was his comment, as he turned away. "What nerve she has!"

Meanwhile Dr. Laurie Greenfell pursued her way quickly back to her house, where she found her services in urgent request, although the worst cases had been taken to the hotel and the cottage hospital.

But about a dozen people in all were under her roof, and some of these were only shaken and bruised. They were passengers of the first-class carriage, and these were handed over to the housekeeper to look after, who was a capital nurse.

Two or three were quite unhurt, but had become insensible from the shock, and as soon as possible they went away to see what help they could render to others in worse straits.

"One gentleman," Martha said, "seemed dreadfully injured. His arm's broken, I think, miss, and he's not conscious. They've took him upstairs, miss, to the spare room."

"I'll go, Martha. Attend to the others, and do all you can for them. There is no one very bad."

And Laurie went upstairs, and, quietly pushing open the door, crossed to the low bed on which they had laid him. A man yet young, with clear-cut, aristocratic features, locked, it almost seemed, in the ineffable repose of death, with silky, bright-hued curls falling over his brow, all streaked and dabbled with blood; the lips, as white as marble, set together as if he had set himself to sustain some such shock as had come to him.

It scarcely needed a professional eye to see at once that the right arm was broken; but first Laurie bent down and laid her hand lightly on his breast.

"He is not dead," she said to herself. "Beyond that I don't know."

She passed her hand with a strange, pitying tenderness over the broad brow as she lifted herself to reach for the brandy, and for one second her lip quivered.

She was still a woman though a doctor, and beauty will always have its own appeal, depending the pity that man or woman gives to helplessness.

It was strange how, even as Laurie Greenfell came to the conclusion that she would act as surgeon for him, the recollection of her careless words only a week or two ago recurred to her mind, and even made her smile, though the smile was a sad one too.

She succeeded after a while in reviving to some extent the dormant life. She was glad to see him open the heavily-fringed eyelids and look for a moment, with a half-dreamy gaze, into her face; but it was evident that he was not fully conscious, and of this she was not sorry, it would make the pain so much the less, perhaps.

"He's quite the aristocrat, miss," Martha remarked later, when Dr. Greenfell, having performed the operation in a manner to do credit to Sir James Paget, and done everything that a doctor's skill and a woman's tender thought could do to ensure the well-being of her patient, retired for a brief moment from the chamber, leaving the housekeeper to watch. "Them rings, miss, he 'ad on his 'and they was beauties, and his clothes all the finest. He is a handsome-looking gentleman, miss!"

"Yes," Laurie said, rather absently. "I must see presently if I can find where to send for his friends," and she went downstairs then, and saw to the comfort of her other guests—gave them refreshment, and sent all but two on their way rejoicing. The residue of the express was sent on to London in the morning, and those who were well enough continued their journey.

"Are you not very tired, Dr. Greenfell?" asked one of those who recovered, a lady who had sustained such a severe shock that she was quite prostrated. "Are you not going to take some wine or brandy?"

"No, thanks," the young physician answered, with her bright, strong smile, that gave help and sympathy, no one knew how or why exactly. "I am having a cup of coffee, and I shall be as fresh as a daisy."

"How strong you must be!" sighed the poor

thing, who just then felt shattered to pieces, and looked with a sort of envy on the lithe form, with its quick yet decided movements, and the sweet, reliable face.

"We shall make you as strong very soon," said Laurie, cheerfully. "You mustn't give way, you know. I'm going to telegraph to your daughter in a minute, and I want to say truly you are pretty well."

And amid all these multifarious duties of hers Laurie found time to inquire how the wounded in the town were going on; and when she had sent off some telegrams, took her way to her patient's chamber to see if she could find card or letter which would give her any idea where to find his relations or friends.

CHAPTER IV.

LAURIE sat by a small table near the bedside of her patient, and opened the tiny ivory card-case which had been taken from his vest pocket.

As her eye fell on the name engraved thereon a slight flush rose to her cheek, and a very decided smile quivered on the delicate lips.

She looked almost as if she could have laughed, if she had not just passed through such scenes as make laughter seem irreverent.

This was the name and address she read,—

"Keith Montrose,

"West End Review,

"18, Wellington-street,
"Strand."

and in the corner of this card was pencilled, in a small, clear hand, "Adelphi Chambers."

"Keith Montrose," said Laurie to herself; "well, Edgar told me he was very handsome, and certainly he merits the encomium—a noble face, too. But how strange, there's not a letter about him that gives one an idea where to get at anyone belonging to him. Hasn't he anyone, I wonder! Oh! here's a letter; but it's only from some tiresome sub, I suppose, dated from Wellington-street. Well, I shall telegraph there, at any rate, and see."

The which she retired from the room to do, leaving Martha to watch Keith Montrose.

"How odd," thought the girl, "that he, of all men, should be brought to my house, and attended by a lady doctor. Dear me! what will he say, poor fellow!"

She was returning, beginning to feel rather anxious at the long-continued unconsciousness of her patient, when Martha came to her and informed her that the gentleman seemed awake like; and Laurie went in, and passing round to his side, laid her cool soft hand first on his wrist and then on his forehead; and she could not help smiling at the dark eyes that were so brilliant, yet so soft, as they were lifted to hers, for there was such unmistakable admiration and half-dreamy wonder in them.

Keith Montrose had not his features under control just now, and he thought this girl looked like some vision from another world. And yet confused, and strangely unwilling to move as he felt, the instinct of the gentleman was so strong that the first words he spoke, suavely and languidly dropping out each word, was a courteous apology and thanks.

"You are so kind. I am sorry to give you trouble."

"It's quite repaid by hearing your voice," said Laurie, smiling. "Are you in any pain now?"

"Not much; this arm feels numbed, and I can't move it."

"You mustn't try to," said Laurie, decisively, but gently; "you will be able to do so, I hope, in a little while. Your arm was broken in the accident, and you must keep quite still."

"Oh!" he said, and the brow contracted, and the lips settled into a look of pain. "I remember; I saw it coming."

"Try not to think of that now," the girl said.

—And after a moment he roused himself, and said,—

"I have no recollection of anything beyond that—when I was brought here, or anything. Someone said just now a Dr. Laurie was attending me. Am I in his house?"

Laurie smoothed away a smile as she answered,—

"Yes; but I am not going to answer any more questions. You must be quiet, and think even as little as possible. But I want to ask you something, please."

"I shall be honoured."

"It was necessary to see among your papers if there was anyone I could write to for you," said Laurie, and she half smiled. "I find I have the honour to receive Mr. Keith Montrose; but there was nothing to tell me of any friends you might have."

"You are too kind," said Montrose, gratefully, wondering the while who this beautiful young stranger was, who had not an atom of embarrassment in look or manner, and, in short, had a sort of professional way with her, tempered with the graceful courtesy of a well-bred lady. "I have no friends I should wish to come to me, no near relations at all; but if I might so far trouble you—"

"Please tell me. You would like a telegram or letter sent to your office for the *West End Review*. I have telegraphed to say you are injured, but if there is anything more—"

He turned aside for a moment, and lifted his left hand to his forehead, pressing it there for a moment before he answered, with an evident effort to recollect.

"Forgive me," he said, then, slowly; "I suppose I am shaken a good deal. I can hardly think. Edmonds, of the Temple, is editing in my absence; would you ask him to take the work still for a little? I will write later. Thanks, a thousand times."

The long lashes drooped on the clear, pale cheek. That small exertion had exhausted him, Laurie saw with anxiety, and she half sighed as she softly stepped to her writing-desk. She would not leave him just yet, she thought.

"It will be some time, my friend," she said, inwardly, "before you are able to write or work. I fancy, though the constitution is strong and has great powers of rallying."

She paused for some minutes, leaning her head on her hand in deep thought, then drawing paper and pen towards her, wrote, in her firm, graceful hand, first to the Editor *pro tem.* of the *West End Review*, then to the landlady of Montrose's chambers, telling her to send down by the first train his servant, whom, no doubt, he would like to have with him.

Then she scribbled a few lines to her sister-in-law,—

"DEAR ELLEN," she wrote, "you have heard of the accident, of course. I have got someone after all, to work my skill on—Keith Montrose, of all men in the world. But as I am a woman as well as a doctor I suppose I must attend to the proprieties, and as he'll be a fixture in my house for a little time, could you come down and stay with me? Ask Mrs. Hinton to stay with Edgar; she's a dear old lady, and will do anything for me. Please be your own answer by return if you can.—Yours ever,

"LAURIE TEMPLE GREENFELL."

CHAPTER V.

THE first available train after the receipt of Laurie's letter brought down Ellen Greenfell, her sister-in-law; and the first thing these ladies did, after the usual greetings had passed, was to look at each other, and burst out laughing. Laurie was the first to recover herself.

"Yes," said she, "it's awfully amusing. I can't help being struck with the comical side of the situation, although it is very sad for him; but, Ellen, think what will he feel when he finds out who I am!"

"He ought to be immensely delighted to have such a charming doctor," said Mrs. Greenfell, drawing off her gloves. "But I daresay, with

the usual ingratitude of men, he will take it all as a matter of course."

"I shall pretend to be his nurse as long as I can—tell him the doctors are all too busy to come, and so on," said Laurie.

"But now, dear, come to your room and install yourself. You see, I had an eye to the respectable—though you do think I have made too little of *les convenances*."

"What did Edgar say?"

"Edgar did as we did—laughed immensely," returned his wife, as the two went upstairs to the pretty chamber prepared for Laurie's guest and chaperone. "But he also said, my dear, what fun it would be if Mr. Montrose found out your fascinations in spite of your masculine avocation."

"Nonsense," returned Laurie, quickly; "everybody does not see me through Eddie's spectacles; please will you excuse me, I must go and look after my patient. You know how to make your self at home with me; I'll send you up some tea," and with that she left the room to return to her patient.

The day tilted over fairly for Keith Montrose; he had received no injury save that of a broken arm, and fortunately there was no fever accompanying this. So that, in a little while, he was permitted to move his quarters to the sofa in the drawing-room—a change which was especially welcome to the young man; for besides detesting what he was pleased to call "coddling," he wanted to see more of his charming nurse—for so he still considered his doctor,—than possible while he was still apart from the family circle. He had been rather puzzled that no doctor had come to see him, and that the beautiful girl, who seemed still to him something more like a vision than a creature of clay, had pronounced, as one gifted with authority, that the broken limb was going on as well as possible, and that she saw no use in keeping him shut up;—his man William had come down—she would send him up. And when he was going to ask her if he might know who was honouring him with such kind care, she had only told him he must not talk; he was not by any means so strong as he supposed.

She spoke only of her sister-in-law, so that he might imagine her to be living with a married brother, or perhaps this lady was a widow. Ellen came into the room once or twice before Keith was allowed, to move, and was introduced only as "my sister-in-law," and if Keith thought in a languid way it was rather odd to mention no name, he gave no heed to the omission. The truth is, Dr. Laurie Greenfell dreamed a *déroulement*, when Keith discovered that he was indebted to one of those lady doctors at whom he was always having shots—and the very lady whom he had so often criticised.

She fancied the feelings of so chivalrous a gentleman would be unenviable; and not only did she want to spare him till he was better able to bear any vexations, but felt the position might be a trifle embarrassing. So she silenced him as long as possible, and he was fain to obey her, both as lady and nurse. "Though he was not an invalid quite, nevertheless, the exertion of dressing and moving downstairs convinced him that he was not fit for much," as he said with a masculine impatience of illness, and he could only rest on the sofa exhausted and languid.

And then Laurie came in and laid her cool, soft hand, all wet with eau-de-Cologne, on his forehead, and the mere touch of those gentle fingers, possessing as they did a most wonderful potency to soothe and strengthen, seemed to quiet the throbbing pulses and give him new life. It seemed almost worth while to be in pain to have such a nurse, he thought.

"It is only the moving," she said; and her low, sweet tones were like music to Keith Montrose, who could scarcely recollect ever having a woman's tender care about him. "You see, one doesn't feel these shocks so much as long as one is still."

He smiled, and for a second clasped her hand in his.

"How shall I thank you? Your very touch has some wonderful magnetic power. But I am burdened with a sense of the trouble and care I am giving you."

"Put aside the burden, then," said Laurie, brightly. "There is no call for it, and none for thanks."

"None! Ah, you should not try and deprive me of the pleasure of being grateful to you!" said Montrose; "if only I might know to whose kindness I am indebted!"

"That seems to prey on your mind," said Laurie, smiling. "You are very curious."

"Forgive me, but I am afraid I am. Won't you tell me?"

"If you like," the girl flushed a little, and she half-turned away and moved a vase on a side table to another position. "You have heard of me, I daresay—Dr. Laurie Greenfell."

She did not look at him as she spoke, and did not see the sudden flush that sprang hotly to his brow. He half-raised himself, and then fell back with a muttered exclamation under his breath that sounded dangerously like "The devil." He was scarcely aware that he had said it even, and certainly never intended her to hear it; he was almost bewildered at the name that fell so softly from her lips in that sweet voice that was all music.

And this graceful womanly woman was the masculine, loud, odd-dressing and generally undesirable person of his imagination! The woman who left her sphere, who spoke on platforms, gave lectures, and took the chair at meetings. Keith passed his hand over his eyes, he could scarcely believe that he was not still dreaming. But no, the *scelte* form, whose every movement had the easy grace of a *femme de société*, whose dark eyes met his so frankly—without a shade of embarrassment, but with a woman's true, pure modesty—whose soft, clinging robe trailed quietly behind her, cut in the approved fashion of '89—this was Dr. Laurie Greenfell!

And in that moment the prejudices that the brilliant and fastidious *littérateur* entertained against the class of lady physicians received a terrific shock, though they by no means crumbled to dust at once. And certain words and phrases his pen had traced with regard to this very Dr. Greenfell, to whom he was indebted for the kindest skill and tenderness, rose up before him, and filled him with remorse and shame.

"Well, are we friends in spite of all?" Laurie's sweet, clear voice broke in on his meditations, which flashed after all through his mind in the course of a few moments, and which had deprived this courtly personage of the power even to utter his surprise.

It was an involuntary movement of his to stretch out his hand and clasp hers; and the blood rushed again to his forehead as he lifted his eyes to her face.

"Forgive me—try to forgive me," he said, very earnestly. "You have been so kind, to whom I owe, perhaps, my very life, you will forgive all. Ah!" he muttered, half turning aside, "it has cut me so deeply!"

"Hush! no, please don't say that!" Laurie said, entreatingly. She liked him for that noble compunction, and had wished so much to spare him yet. "Why, you know I never remember all that is said about me, and public characters must expect to get knocks sometimes."

"If I had known," said Montrose, biting his moustache. "What can I say to apologise for all the unkind and hard things I have written?"

"Just one thing," said Laurie, laughing merrily. "Now tell me frankly if your broken arm doesn't feel as comfortable as can be expected?"

"*Corpo di Bacco!*" and this time Keith positively looked incredulous, and betrayed an inclination to be amused as well as a little horrified. "You don't mean to say that you performed that operation?"

"Certainly, my dear Mr. Montrose," replied Laurie, fairly laughing now. "I didn't want the world to be deprived of the prowess of your right hand, and in those cases there is no time to be lost. I don't in general lay myself out for surgery, but I can do anything. You see my hands are strong," and she held up her white, pretty hands, "and I never lose nerve."

"You are very, very brave," he said, earnestly, with an unconscious admiration that a month ago

he would have deemed it impossible he should ever feel for a woman doctor.

"But if you don't feel satisfied," said the physician, smiling. "I will telegraph to London directly for whomsoever you like. I don't fancy you have a family physician, though."

"Not I, faith," said Montrose. "I have never had a day's illness since I was a child; and you will not turn me over, Miss—Dr. Greenfell"—and he smiled a little—"to the tender mercies of some one else, will you?"

"No, not if you are not afraid of me. I like to see my patients through; but I shall not be in the least offended if you are not disposed to trust me."

"You are cruel, fair physician," said Montrose, deprecatingly; "indeed, it is enough my memory stings me, and you bring back my foolish words."

"Forgive me," said Laurie, deeply touched, "I had no thought to wound you, only a man cannot command trust always."

"I trust you," he answered, and there was the slightest, almost unconscious, stress on the last word, and Laurie smiled; perhaps if she had been an ordinary woman she might have coloured, but she had got such a trick of merging the woman in the doctor that she never thought of such words or tones bearing any other interpretation than a strictly professional one.

"And now I think you have talked long enough," she said with a smile, "and you know I am your physician, and you must obey."

"And there can be no greater happiness," said Keith, and he watched her as she glided away, and the room seemed exceedingly lonely and dreary without her, and then Mrs. Greenfell came in, and taking her work sat down, and began talking in her genial, kindly way.

She had wisely abstained from being present at the *éclaircissement*, and did not touch now on the subject at all, but spoke on indifferent topics.

The accident, the news of the day, and then glided imperceptibly to speak of her husband, and quite naturally about Laurie and her vocation. And Keith was, it may readily be imagined, not an unwilling listener on this point, although it must be confessed that certain phrases and turns of expression that came in the most matter-of-course way to the lips of Laurie's sister made the fastidious opposer of woman's emancipation wince.

At the close of the day, however, he frankly acknowledged to himself that never in his life had he passed such happy hours, although he was but barely recovered from a serious accident—was doctored by a lady M.D., and, so to speak, was in a nest of the objectionable part of the feminine world.

CHAPTER VI.

KEITH MONTROSE was sitting alone in the drawing-room one morning about a fortnight after the accident. It was a brilliant September day; sunshine without and sunshine streaming in in mellowed rays through the lace curtains; a soft breeze conveying to his ears the gentle plash of the waves, rippling on the beach below.

From the low chair in which he sat Keith could see Laurie's lithe form as she stood on the shingle, throwing stones into the water for her dog, who was gambolling about her, sending forth mighty barks that resounded again and again through the clear air. And as Montrose looked at that picture, of which he thought he could never tire, the somewhat sombre gravity that had lain on lip and brow relaxed, and a half-smile crept over the delicate lips and lit up the deep dark eyes; and then he sighed, a little impatiently, and glanced at his useless right hand, and from that to a letter that lay on the table by his side.

It was from the editor *pro tem.* of the *West End Review*. He wrote in the kindest way, regretting that it was impossible for him to continue more than a portion of the work now, as

he had his own to attend to. Could not Keith write the reviews?

"The public miss your brilliant critiques, *mon ami*," wrote his colleague. "I don't pretend to supply more than your business place; and Johnson, your publisher, called yesterday and wanted to know if he might send proofs of your new book. They are standing still till you can correct them."

There is scarcely a more painful feeling than that of knowing the tide of business and life is going on—that tide with which one ought to be swimming—that business in which our part is unfilled—and that one is set aside from this life.

Montrose was impotent to bear his part, conscious that work was waiting to be done, and that the power to do it was lacking, though it was not now mentally that Montrose was unequal to work, but he could not write.

His left hand would not serve him for that, and even the wondrous charm that lay in Laurie Greenfell's power to exercise over him could not reconcile him to stagnation.

If he could have done his work indeed the days would have flown by on golden wings; but this morning's post had only poured in upon him work and offers of work which, at present, he was powerless to accomplish.

He sat, leaning his forehead on his hand—the broad brow slightly contracted and the lips closely compressed, and he was so pre-occupied that he did not hear the light foot-fall he knew so well, nor looked up until a shadow fell across his sight.

The gloom and gravity fled away like clouds chased over the sky by a fresh, clear breeze, and he rose up, with his bright smile, to bring forward a chair for her.

Laurie had not removed that grey plumed hat of hers in which she looked so "gloriously beautiful" mentally said Keith, but she seemed no more aware of the feelings he held, so loyally in check than a child, and her manner was as free and unembarrassed to this handsome guest and patient as if he had been her brother; for with all her knowledge of the world and her mixing in society there was in Laurie Greenfell a singular simplicity and guilelessness, a certain innocence even that was far removed from what one calls "greenness," and that was more than half her charm.

Certainly to Keith Montrose she was like a fresh west wind that bears strength and life, and yet is soft and gentle enough for the tenderest lamb that frisks in the field.

So now her very presence seemed to chase away the anxieties and soothe the natural impatience that had cast a shadow over these bright days.

"No, please don't disturb yourself," said Laurie, laying her hand on his arm, and the light touch sent a thrill through every fibre. "When will you cease to look on me as a lady and not a doctor?"

"Never, I hope," he said, with a low bow, and somehow her words vexed him inwardly, he knew not why. Why would she always bring the "doctor" before him so? "You are not placed beyond the pale of that courtesy which is due to a woman because you write M.D. after your name."

"Ah! well, I mustn't quarrel with you. I shall never get you to be a bear; but please sit down now, because you know you are really not very strong yet."

She marked the shade that came over his face, and that he bit his lips as he sank back again—saw it, and determined to get to the bottom of whatever was making him anxious.

"You were looking very grave when I came in just now," she said, in her winning, frank way. "I hope you had no bad news this morning?"

He half smiled.

"You are so quick, Miss Greenfell, but you are too kind to trouble yourself with my gravity. I must order my features more strictly."

"You wouldn't deceive me," said Laurie, coolly, "and you have admitted that there is cause for gravity. But I won't weary you."

"Dear Miss Greenfell," Keith said, with such sudden earnestness in voice and eyes that just

for one second the girl was startled, "nothing you could say or do could be dictated save by the noblest generosity. But I cannot trouble you with my anxieties, and, indeed there is no trouble that I cannot bear."

"Shall I tell you what it is?" said Laurie, with an archness that had in it no suspicion of coquetry. "I can see through letter cases and read that letter."

"I can believe it, Miss Greenfell; your eyes could see a thousand miles if there was one creature to be helped by their keenness."

"What a number of compliments you pay," said Dr. Laurie, half-leaning, half-sitting on the table, and crossing her hands before her; "now I am going to read your mind. You are very impatient because you cannot work, and you feel like an eagle in prison chained down."

"By golden fetters, fair lady," said Keith, and if his smile was jesting there was deeper meaning in the tone than she fashioned.

"Golden or not, fetters still," she retorted. "You see I know what men are, and they have not a quarter the patience of women. There is work waiting for you and you cannot do it. Have I touched the wound?"

"But so lightly, so graciously that it cannot ache," said Keith.

"Thank you. That is very kind, because you are so proud and reserved. I was afraid of you."

He flushed suddenly, and then grew pale. The impulsive words that sprang to his lips were once more crushed down.

"I don't think you could wound me," he said, quietly shading his eyes with his hand. "Well, you are right, Miss Greenfell. And yet I would try to free myself from the charge of ingratitude. You have been so generous as to ask me to be yours and your sister's guest for the time you are here, and I know you will understand that I am deeply touched by your kindness, and that it is happiness to be so honoured."

"But," said Laurie, quietly, "you feel helpless, and have a thousand thoughts in that restless brain of yours, that are eager to fly out into the world, but there is no servant to carry them out. And there are proofs of your new book waiting to be corrected, and I think very likely Mr. Edmonds has written to ask you if you can't do some articles for the *Review*."

"It is a Highlander you should have been, Miss Greenfell," said Montrose, laughing, "for you have the gift of second sight!"

"Now," said Laurie, and she smiled in acknowledgment of this compliment, "that I have—to talk shop—found the bullet, I am going to try, and extract it—wouldn't my hand do nearly as well for some of your work as your own—at least *pro tem*?"

"My dear child!" Keith began to say, but passed a second. He was older than her certainly, but still the adjuration was affectionate for so short an acquaintance, and she was not his sister, nor a child; yet her sweet eagerness to help him, her offer so simply made, actuated by the purest and most unselfish motives, made it impossible to receive it with a cold "Miss Greenfell."

"I will not try even to thank you for your kindness," he said, earnestly; "but I could not trespass on your time, nor give you so much trouble."

"It would be a pleasure, and I should like to do it very much! Because, you see, if you worry yourself in this way you retard your own recovery and defeat your own ends, Mr. Montrose. And I know all about proof correcting—if you tell me what you want done; I have done scores of proofs—medical books you know—said she, mischievously, and if he winced a little, yet he did not show it to her. "You can dictate and I will write. Is it a compact?"

"Your hand on it," he said, half laughing; but he bent and touched his lips reverently to the white hand that lay in his. And was it her fancy, or that something had just startled her a little that morning, that he let it go rather reluctantly; his clasp lingering around her fingers a trifle longer than it had before?

And these were indeed golden hours for Keith Montrose, when she sat, her graceful

head bent over the papers, her fingers tracing so deftly and surely the words that came as from an inexhaustible store from his lips. How he grew to love to watch every line of that expressive face with its ever-varying shades! how he looked for her coming in the morning, her bright,—"Are you ready, Mr. Montrose?"

Now more and more as he came to sound the keen brilliant intellect that was so akin to his own—to find out the quick living sympathies that stirred him too—he wondered that he could ever have condemned this woman, who was not less woman because she wrote Dr. before her name, because she had dived deep into studies that are usually set apart for men, because her clear voice had been heard in public, or because always and everywhere she advocated a woman's rights, and, indeed, duty, to give the world such bright talents as God had given her.

Keith Montrose had in these days thoughts which he could not face without an inward shrinking. He knew—he could not disguise from himself—that he loved Laurie Greenfell, notwithstanding all that she was and all that she did which were contrary to his tastes or his prejudices. He knew perfectly well that he counted and would fain have retarded every minute that flew by too fast, bringing him nearer to the time when separation was inevitable—separation at least from this close and daily intercourse.

Of course in town the friendship thus strangely formed would not be broken off; but in both their busy lives opportunities would be rare. And yet Keith Montrose asked himself what was to be the end of it all!

Would she, if she loved him, ever consent to give up this work of which she always spoke with such enthusiasm, and which she always seemed to regard as a sacred vocation, not lightly entered upon, and not lightly to be thrown aside?

Could he then ever consent that his wife should pursue that profession which he chose to consider set apart for men only?

Could he see his wife on a platform, speaking in public, hearing her talked over, discussed, in fact lead as public a life as he himself did?

No! was the first thought that answered the mental question—that could never be. His wife must belong to him absolutely; he could not bear a divided allegiance.

And yet, could he give her up? Did she love him after all?

How could he tell? For Laurie had always that sweet, frank simplicity of manner that was a natural veil to deeper feelings.

In such thoughts and struggles Keith Montrose passed a sleepless night, but came no nearer to a solution, and no nearer to a determination to risk all his hopes on the question,—

"Are you willing to give up your life's work for my sake?"

And so the days went on, every minute that passed bringing nearer the separation that was inevitable; for now there wanted but a few days to the end of Dr. Greenfell's holiday, and she said she must go back to her patients.

But she sighed even as she said it, and her eyes dropped, and when she was alone she would press her hands over her brow, and mutter, impatiently,—

"What folly! What have I to do with such things?"

"What things?" the young physician meant did not appear except, perhaps, to her own mind.

And if some one had told Dr. Laurie Greenfell, when she started for her month's scarcely-wished-for holiday, that the return would seem dreary as if she were leaving a paradise on earth, she would have scouted the idea with scorn—and so was our dear young doctor "in love" at last.

CHAPTER VII.

"Your knight has quite struck his colours, Laurie," said Mrs. Greenfell, laughing. "One never hears a word raised against the medical ladies." And he said to me the other day that he supposed a woman could be everything that was sweet and pure and good, though she lectured

and went in for women's rights; but still I don't know," continued the lady, "whether he had an particular lady under consideration."

"Pooh!" said Laurie, and stepped through the window, flushing a little. "He could not think differently, though he would not say it in courtesy," she thought, and sighed, as she took her way down to the beach and away over the rocks. "Ah, me! this is the last day I shall look at you, dear old sea! I have enjoyed this holiday so much, I have got spoiled, I think; for it will be an effort to throw myself into work again. He won't want me any more," ran those indefinite thoughts, which would startle us if we ever put them into words; "he can write himself now. What pleasant times they were! In town we shall meet, of course—at least, perhaps he still thinks the same of—Mr. Montrose!" she suddenly uttered aloud, and stopped dead for a moment, confused a little, for there was the embodiment of her thoughts standing before her among the rocks, a bend of which had hidden him from her sight. But she recovered herself immediately.

He came forward to meet her, and gave her his hand—a needless courtesy—which she, nevertheless, accepted over some pieces of fallen rocks.

"My right hand once more," he said, smiling; "thanks to you, doctor."

"Nay, more thanks to your own constitution," said Laurie. "You have had a wonderful recovery."

"I won't allow you to deprive yourself of all title to my gratitude," said Keith, and he placed his hand gently on hers. "You have done more for me, too, than cure a physical injury—you have shown me a great mistake I made, and have made me repent of the harsh judgment I once poured on you. I chose to deem you had left the shelter of womanhood in choosing a man's profession. It gives me a deeper pain than I can tell you to recall that. I wish I could call in all I have written of you, child, and burn out every harsh word—more, burn out the very memory from—"

He stopped abruptly; and her hand, that firm hand that could guide unerringly a surgeon's lancet without so much as a quiver—was trembling in his clasp.

The bright colour had rushed to her cheeks, and her face was bent down.

For he had spoken with a passionate regret—and a new tenderness thrilling in the low, sweet tones, that sent her a nameless, a wondrous happiness.

And seeing her so moved, he bent his head down, and a half smile crept over the beautiful mouth.

"Laurie," he said, softly, "is it so, my darling?" For her only answer had been to lift for a second those lustrous grey eyes, and meet his glance, so full of pleading, passionate love; and had put both her hands in his, and he drew her to his breast, and clasped her close in silence—in the great joy that almost dazzled his sight for the moment, scarcely able to realise that he held her his own now.

Was he worthy of the love of such a woman as this? And, forgetful of all that might lie between them yet, he lifted the face bent down on his breast, and softly pressed his lips to hers.

"Is it really true, my darling? Tell me with those soft lips, have I won you for own—will you give this brave, grand heart to my keeping?"

It was like brave Laurie to meet his eyes for a moment, and answer steadfastly, earnestly,—

"I love you, Keith—you have 'all my life'!" But presently she lifted her head and said, laying her hand on his,—

"But Keith—"

"What is the difficulty, sweetheart?"

Yet he knew even as he spoke so softly, and drew in his breath, bracing himself for the trial.

"You will not want me to leave my profession?" she said, a shadow on her brow.

"I thought that was coming," he said laughing, trying to speak lightly; how fain would he put off the question. "You don't want to give up the sick people—remember you have drawn your prize, sweetheart."

"We shall see about being a 'prize,'" said

Laurie, sadly, but added, recurring to her question—"Please be serious, Keith."

"Supposing I say yes, Laurie, what then?"

He spoke gravely, seriously, almost sadly; and the girl drew back a little, growing pale, with a half-perplexed look in her eyes. "Keith, you don't mean it!"

"Do you love your profession more than me, dear child?" he asked, drawing her to him; and she answered him with the clear, frank light in her eyes.

"No, Keith—not better; but love only cannot fill my life. I am a woman, not a girl, Keith, and I have an object—an aim all my life. I know that if I gave it up I should never be happy, and you would not be happy. You would not be afraid of holding less of my heart, Keith! do you love me less because you have your work, so that you could not give it up even for my sake?"

"And if I said that I should not like my wife to work, what then, Laurie?"

"You do not mean it, you do not—Oh! Keith," she said, passionately bowing her face against him—"say you do not mean it, it would break my heart to part."

For a moment Keith was absolutely silent—silent as he clasped the woman he loved close to him, and thought, with a passionate bitterness, that her words gave no other alternative,—to part—not to give way.

"Keith!" Laurie said again—lifting her face, and seeking his with an appealing glance, "say you do not mean that; you are only jesting."

"Would it break your heart, Laurie?" She drew back clasping her hands before her.

"You are serious then?" she half-whispered, and he turned aside a little.

"Is it so unnatural?" he made answer. "Am I the first man living who has asked the whole heart of the woman he loved?"

"Is your heart divided with me, Keith, because you have your life's work? Is there no room for both there? or is it only a woman who has not a soul large enough to love her husband and her work?"

"It is different, Laurie," Montrose said; "a wife has duties that a man has not; his duty is to work for the woman he loves. There is no necessity that you should work; I am not a poor, even a struggling, man. I can give you all and more than you have worked for with your own abilities. They may have been right enough while you had no other ties, but why?"—he broke off passionately now, and turning, clasped her hands once more in both of his—"why speak of this now—why crush this happiness, just found, with useless reasoning and talk? Laurie—Laurie! be my own darling all—all my own; every wish, every whim shall be gratified."

"Oh, hush, hush," she broke out suddenly, almost shrieking from him. "I ask of you bread and you give me a stone. Wish; whims! I have but that one. These are the playthings you might hold out to a child, whose only thought in being married was that she should be the mistress of a real doll's house, with a real king beside her; not to a woman with aspirations as high, as good as ever man may have."

She stopped abruptly, pressing one hand to her brow, as though in that action to gather herself together.

"Forgive me, Keith," she said; then lifting her eyes half-pleading to his face, "bear with me; listen to me."

"My Laurie!"—Keith drew her to him gently, speaking with that soft persuasiveness that is hardest to resist; "why should we speak now of this, and break up so soon the happiness that I, at least, seem never to have found till now? There is time enough to think of all these things, is there not, *chérie*?"

Laurie rested her bright, curly head in silence against him for some minutes. Yes, it was a sweet dream so to stand sheltered in his arms, his soft kisses pressed on brow and lip—but a dream—a dream only!

The large eyes looking so steadily out to sea held a world of thought. Keith bending down presently asked, half-smiling,—

"Is that agreed, Laurie?"

She started, and her lips quivered a little, but she answered, steadfastly,—

"I could not rest even for an hour in uncertainty, Keith. There is no use in putting off thoughts about—about this. I shall not change in a day, a week, or a month; because this work, these duties that I have embraced, they are not to me merely an occupation, Keith, oh, try to understand me!—to fill up time, and which could easily be given up at the cost of a little self-sacrifice. To me this vocation is something sacred; it would be like a man deserting his colours for me to give up the care of those whom Heaven has afflicted. And then, Keith, that is the highest view; but there is another. I might be happy a while, but I know, as surely as that sun will set to-night, that could not last. I should be ever longing to have again some definite work—the work I love—but it would be too late; my life would be empty. Perhaps," she said, half-sorrowfully, "it might be happier for me if I could rest content with the ordinary cares with which most women can fill their lives; but I am not made so—I cannot alter my nature. Oh, Keith," with a faint smile—"why did you love an intellectual woman?"

"It is this brighter, noble mind I love, Laurie," Keith interrupted, passionately. "Do you think I should choose a life's companion who could be little else but the mistress of my home? You know me, Laurie; you know I do not think a woman's place is only to sit by her husband's hearth and see to the household. But there is a wide gulf between such a *housewife* and a woman whose whole life is and must be given up to an absorbing work, and that work not meet for a woman's career. At least—at least, think of all this Laurie; do not, for Heaven's sake, sever at once this tie so recently made. Let the question rest a month—a year—any time—so that you do not—"

Laurie drew back, her hands fell down lightly clasped, her clear eyes looked into his.

"And you?" she said, a little bitterly, a little sadly.

And Keith Montrose flushed red and then grew pale; he understood the barely indicated infection of disappointment, and was silent.

"Do you ask no time to think—to consider?" Laurie said, quietly, yet without any bitterness now.

"Are you so sure that you can decide in this moment?—But that is not for me to ask," she added, the quick colour flushing to her brow. "You can only do as you think right—as I must."

And then, when she had said this, she broke quite down, and Keith took her in his arms and held her close till the storm had passed, and pleaded passionately with her, and moved beyond measure, promised all and everything.

She should do as she liked. He would stand in her way in nothing—only if she would be his. He could not give her up.

But Laurie only shook her head, and smiled sadly, putting her hands in his, as she spoke gently and steadily,—

"No, Keith," she said, "that must not be. You promise all things now because you are moved by my foolish weakness. Forgive me. I am still a woman, but so must I not come to you—so must not this barrier be laid, because this is not of your free will, Keith. You are not changed; and though you would abide by your promise—that I know—it would be bitter to you, and you would be unhappy; and so—and so," she faltered a moment, and then went on more firmly, "it is better that we part, perhaps, after all—"

"No, no, Laurie! Oh! Laurie, my heart!"—Montrose bent his forehead down on her hand—"cease, cease, in pity; don't say that. Part! I cannot, I cannot, I will not—see. Let it be so—wait—three months—six—a year, and then—"

"I shall not change, Keith," the girl said, half wearily.

"Let it be so," was all he answered, pleading as if for life, as indeed was love not more than life! "Laurie, promise. It is not much to ask—promise," and she gave her promise, which would stand the test of the year's waiting.

CHAPTER VIII.

AND so the holiday—the brief, bright holiday was over—the holiday that had been so inexpressibly sweet, happy time to Laurie Greenfell. It was all over, and grey clouds had settled on her life. She knew at once the joy of loving and being loved, and the bitterness of parting.

She had come back that day from the seaside, and had met her sister as usual. She said nothing to her of what had passed, and if Ellen wondered and conjectured if there was "anything between those two," she was discreet enough not to hazard even a hint for some enlightenment; for Laurie, with all her frankness, held an inner citadel of reserve to which only two people could find an entrance—her brother and her lover.

Keith Montrose went back to town the next day. He could now resume work, and work urgently called him. At parting he held Laurie close in his arms, and kissed the broad forehead, the soft lips with a wistful, passionate pleading that sent a momentary thrill of weakness through her being, and the words he spoke as he released her and turned away were sharper than death to her—"Oh, Laurie, Laurie, I had thought I had all your heart."

And afterwards Laurie had locked herself in her room, and wept, perhaps, the first passionate tears of her life; and then had remembered that she was physician as well as woman, and that tears unnerved one; and so, duty being ever her watchword, had pulled herself together, and given way no more, and she was stronger now.

Now once more settled in town she threw herself with added energy into her work, and was so busy and so engrossed that Edgar grumbled out "It was no earthly use her taking a holiday if she was to fag herself to death afterwards."

"Work is good for me," Laurie said, smiling. She was ever bright, as of yore, only alone came heart-sinking and weariness.

"You know I am one of those unfortunately constituted beings who can't live without work."

"But you may overdo it, my child," said her brother, with a certain anxious tenderness that somehow made Dr. Laurie's smile a little tremulous. "You spend your life in caring for others. I wonder will there come a time when you shall be taken care of?"

"I am an independent woman, my dear," returned Laurie, stooping down to untwist a piece of fringe on her dress from the paw of her St. Bernard who had mercifully become entangled therein. "I don't want taking care of, and now I shall have heaps, heaps to do," said she, standing up again, "for you know, Edgar, cholera has broken out in Portland Town, and it will be worse yet, and we shall want all the help we can get."

"Laurie, Laurie, you must not go," said Edgar quickly, earnestly. "There are plenty—"

"Why should I not, dear boy?" so replied, Laurie, opening her eyes; "that is my duty, you know. I visit many poor people in that quarter."

And Edgar said no more. He knew it was little use trying to move Dr. Laurie when she had made up her mind.

"Do you think, Nelly," he said to his wife that night as he came into that lady's drawing-room for a chat; "that Montrose cared for our Laurie?"

"If he didn't, he had neither eyes nor sense," responded the lady, promptly.

"Well, but that's no answer. Did he?"

"How should I know! He hasn't told me, of course, and Laurie has said nothing. He was very devoted down there, naturally; and I thought and I hoped— But, there!" said Mrs. Greenfell, crossly; "Laurie is one of those women who makes a god of her work or her 'vocation,' and would sooner break her heart than give it up."

"And Montrose would demand the sacrifice?" said Edgar, thoughtfully.

"Naturally. A man doesn't want a wife who is always running away after sick people."

"And Montrose objects on principle to lady doctors, too," said Edgar. "But do you know, laughing, 'the West End Review' has been singularly reticent about the question of late; and when the people at — Hospital decided not to admit women students the Review simply

made the announcement, and had nothing to say for or against."

"No! I didn't see that. But you know, Edgar, if Laurie has really refused him, because he wants her to give up her practice, I think it is quite infatuation on her part."

"I am not so sure of that," returned Edgar. "You see she had first these duties; it is not like a woman who takes up something after she is married."

"I don't see any difference," responded his wife. At twelve o'clock at night people do not see differences which entail arguments. "A woman's real sphere is home. After all, Edgar, it's all very well before she is married, but when a man like Keith Montrose—who is in all respects a most brilliant *parti*—loves a woman, well, she ought to marry him—if she loves him, that is," added Mrs. Greenfell, who by no means approved of mercenary marriages.

"Ah, my dear," laughed her husband, good-humouredly; "you are like most women! You forget the principle, in thinking how nice it would be. Supposing Montrose were plain and good—what then?"

"I shouldn't wish Laurie to throw herself away," retorted Mrs. Edgar, with a feminine aversion to face a hard and fast principle. "Laurie ought to remember that she has no right to break a man's heart that she may mend other people's bodies."

And this sally caused Edgar to burst into such a fit of laughter that his wife was sure it must wake little Arty in the next room, and on this pretence hastened into that apartment to see, and Edgar went back to his dressing-room shaking his head and still laughing.

While Laurie Greenfell went on her way, steadfastly hiding this, the first bitter suffering of her own in her life, how was it with Keith Montrose? How was he fighting his battle with love, and pride, and the habit of thought of his lifetime?

He had met Laurie two or three times in society, and they had spoken together as friends might, but nothing more; and it had been almost as much pain as joy to him to see her so, and each parting had been more bitter than the last.

Hour after hour Keith would pace his room or sit perfectly still, far into the night, and think all out again and again, and each time came to no other conclusion than that already made. If it had been any other profession! He had no prejudice in favour of an ultra-domestic life. He did not by any means look on a wife in the light of a mere "household fairy"; but a physician, at everyone's call, tending all sorts of people, seeing all sorts of sights and things unfit for a woman—his wife—Keith Montrose!

No, that could not be; and yet, how perfectly woman she was! How he missed every day—every hour, her bright, tender smile; the soft, tender touch, the dear companionship. Could she be more truly a woman if she had done nothing but sit in drawing-rooms all her life!

So came the autumn—a burning hot season this year; and in the poor quarters about Portland Town, as Laurie had said, the cholera raged, and there was enough there to do for doctors and nurses and whosoever would and could help.

In this month many of the physicians had gone out of town, and this, therefore, threw more work on those who were left.

Of these was Dr. Laurie Greenfell. She shrank from no work—no task seemed too much for her. She was here, there, and everywhere, and there was not a miserable room in the whole district where her bright, beautiful face was not doubly welcome.

She would come at any hour and go anywhere, and gave ungrudgingly not only attendance and advice, but, where needed, money, and from her house came often and often that nourishment which was necessary to convalescents, or for helpless widows and children.

In those difficult days Laurie lived, indeed, for others, not for herself. Of herself she never thought.

(Continued on page 163.)

DIANA'S DIAMONDS.

—20—

CHAPTER XXXI.

I DID not see much of Lady Lorraine for a week or two after this, save at a distance. I saw her, for instance, at the Cowes Regatta, the centre of a crowd of worshippers, dressed in the most perfect of sea-going gowns, and looking not more than five and twenty. I saw her at Goodwood Races, one of the most remarkable figures on the lawn—clad in a white silk, draped with black lace, bonnet and parasol to match, and with crimson flowers in her bonnet, on her parasol and in her bouquet. She was, as usual, the cynosure of all eyes, and followed by a little band of men. One carried her field-glasses, which were daintily mounted in gold and ivory. Another had charge of her wrap, a third of her fan. It was a kind of royal progress, and she passed Hugh, Mrs. Rose and me quite close, with but a faint smile, and a mere lowering of the eyelids. I felt rather hurt and resentful for the first time in my life, and Hugh was bitterly pleased, and whispered to me,—

"You see she has not waited for you to take the first step, Rance, and perhaps it is as well. Now you will have every excuse for saying, 'not at home!'"

But in the depths of my heart I knew perfectly well that a few smiles and a few sweet words from her ladyship, and I should be as much her slave as ever.

We only went to Goodwood the first day, Ada, Rose, and I, but Hugh attended the races each day. He told me that Lady Lorraine was well to the fore in splendid gowns, and that people swarmed round her like flies round a pot of honey. He also told me that the Ring had scored tremendously, and that some of the backers had been badly hit—notoriously Carden, who had gone a mucker on a horse called "Blue Ruin," and was just about stone broke, from which curious phraseology I gathered that Captain Carden had lost a great deal of money over the recent meeting.

Next day I met Lady Lorraine, in fact—in Palmerston-road. She was walking with Captain Carden, and looked unusually pale, and was talking (for her) in a rapid and excited manner. She scarcely noticed me. Judge, then, of my utter amazement when I had a visit from her that self-same evening, at the extraordinary hour of half-past nine o'clock. Hugh was dining at our mess, as it was a big guest night, and he was bound to be there, and I had partaken of a slender meal alone, and was trying over some new accompaniment on the guitar, when the drawing-room door opened; and, quite unannounced, Lady Lorraine walked in.

So amazed was I that I dropped the guitar and sat and stared at her. She was dressed in her dinner-dress of crimson satin and black lace, and had a diamond butterfly sparkling at her throat, and another in her hair. All this was revealed when she removed a very long fur-lined cloak which entirely enveloped her, having a hood drawn over her head.

Without a word she coolly took off this wrap, laid it on a chair; then, as if she was an invited and expected guest, she walked over to the fireplace and threw herself down into a low chair, opposite to me.

"How do you do, Lady Lorraine?" I said, rather stiffly.

"Very ill, indeed, my sweet Angelina!" was her calm reply. And as I looked at her face, as she lay comfortably back against the dark velvet cushions of her lounge, I noted mentally that she had aged ten years since I had last seen her. Her lips had lost their firmness, deep lines seemed to have suddenly appeared in her face, her eyes looked sunken and anxious.

What had happened?

"You are naturally surprised at this strange visit from me, but I knew you were alone this evening. Sir Roper is dining at your mess, and I wanted an hour's uninterrupted talk with you—undisturbed and perfectly private. I have

something to say to you—something to tell you—of the last importance."

"To tell me, Lady Lorraine!" I echoed, in amazement.

"Yes, to tell you, Diana Halford; and what I have to tell you is for your ear alone. Before we go any farther, will you fetch me a testament?"

I thought this an extraordinary request. Was she going to read and expound to me? Nevertheless, to hear was to obey, and I left the room and presently returned with what she required.

She took it in her hand, and examined it; then sat up erect, and tendered it back to me, saying,—

"I want you to swear on this that what I am about to tell you will never reveal to human being—without my permission."

"I will promise to keep secret whatever you may wish to confide in me," I answered; "but I would rather not take an oath."

"But you must," she replied, tapping her foot imperiously, "otherwise I cannot tell you my secret."

"Then I am afraid I must decline your confidence," I returned, with unmoved composure.

"That is out of your power—you must share it!"

"I see no must in the matter."

"No, of course you do not, as you are in complete ignorance of what I am about to tell you. Once you are as wise as you will be, very shortly, you will see a very large must in the matter."

"At least permit me to tell Hugh?—I ask no more."

"No; I cannot permit you to tell anyone."

"Does it concern you alone?"

"You and me," she answered, briefly. "Come," she added, impatiently, "we are losing very valuable time. I may never have such another golden opportunity as this. Make up your mind to give me your promise, Diana, and take the oath."

"No, I cannot, cannot promise to keep what seems a serious matter from Hugh. Between husbands and wives there should be no secrets. I am sure you know that yourself."

"Quite an exploded idea! Come, I will conjure with what will surely move you. I implore you, as you value my friendship, to do as I request. To be silent will harm no one, and will save me from misery untold. It is not much I ask of you, Diana, only silence; and all this time—my fate, my honour, my happiness—may everything in life I value—is trembling in the balance, and it is for you to give me a pledge, and save me."

Her voice was low and soft; it thrilled me.

"Oh! Lady Lorraine!—I save you! How can I—a stranger to you and yours a few months ago—have such extraordinary influence over your life and happiness? You talk in riddles."

"Riddles, indeed! Oh, Diana! how hard you are. I come to you for help, and come in vain!" (tears stood in her eyes as she spoke). "You will be sorry—oh! more than sorry—that you have failed me in my need, when you know all. More, I am ready to swear on this book that you will never forgive yourself if you do not help me now."

Her tears and her appeal had the desired effect. I was generous and impulsive. I could not endure to see my idol in distress and tears, nor listen to her upbraidings.

And few young girls, let me here remark, could have withstood the prayers and tears of this beautiful arch-enchantress.

"Here—give me the book then," I said, abruptly, "and I will promise. I swear most solemnly on this Holy Testament never to reveal the secret to a soul, that you are about to impart, without your permission."

"And that you will never have," she added, in a low voice. Then wiping her eyes, she rose and stood beside me, and said,— "Prepare yourself for something that will seem incredible, but which is perfectly true."

"I am prepared to hear what you have to say."

"THE HUMAN HAIR: Its Restoration and Preservation." A Practical Treatise on Baldness, Greyness, Superfuous Hair, &c. 40 pages. Post-free six stamps, from Dr. HORN, Hair Specialist, Bournemouth.

But do tell it soon; my heart is beating so fast, and I cannot endure suspense."

"Turn round and look in the glass—look at yourself. Now look at me—are you any the wiser?"

"Not the least."

"You have no imagination. Can you not imagine what I looked like at your age?"

"Yes," I replied. "I suppose your hair was fairer, and your figure slimmer."

"Dance!—dance!—as a London fog. Then I see I must tell you, Diana," she said, taking my hands in both of hers, holding them so tightly that she hurt me, looking me full in the face. "I am—your mother!"

When she had uttered those four words I gave a shriek, tore my hands from hers, and retreated several paces, placing a chair between us. Then I gasped out,—

"Lady Lorraine, you must be mad!"

"Never more sane in my life! But I don't wonder that you are startled, and that you think me crazy. I feel very old indeed when I realise the fact that I have a grown-up married daughter."

She was perfectly collected as she spoke, and stood on the hearth rug in her sweeping laces and satins, and flashing diamonds, one perfect arm resting on the mantel-piece, completely mistress of the position; whilst I, trembling all over like an aspen-leaf, and convinced that I had to do with a mad woman, cowered behind a substantial chair, and kept a greedy eye on the bell!

CHAPTER XXXII.

"You need not be so desperately frightened," said my unwelcome guest. "I am not insane; I am not going to murder you. I am really your mother, though I can easily believe that just at present it is rather hard for your mind to grasp the fact."

"My mother died when I was a year old," I answered. "She lies in her grave these twenty years. How dare you assume her name! Now I begin to believe in what people said of you, Lady Lorraine, though I had closed my ears to the best of my power. Now I believe that you are what they say—a heartless, unscrupulous and dangerous woman."

"Oh! they say that, do they? Well, in future you will know that they are speaking of your mother; and if I am heartless, unscrupulous and dangerous, take care that these little traits are not hereditary. You have inherited my face, although you do not see the resemblance; why should you not inherit my nature?"

"My mother is dead—my mother is dead!" I reiterated. "She died twenty years ago," I repeated, in a voice I scarcely recognised as my own.

"Yes she did! She died to you and her husband—not really, but figuratively. She has come to life again as Lady Lorraine."

"I will not believe it. No, never!" I cried, covering my eyes with my hand, and thus shutting out that brilliant figure standing before the fire-place.

I could not bear to think that all my tender memories, nurtured secretly, and none the less strong, nurtured for years as a secret possession, were all at once to be thus swept away by a few crazy words from Lady Lorraine, who was surely not responsible for her actions this evening.

"I see you don't believe me, my little Rance, that I nursed in my arms, and knitted little socks for, and was proud of in every way. Yes, you had soft hair like golden spun silk, and were only ten months old when I saw you last. Come here to the glass, and I will convince you this time. Come!"

Mechanically I moved towards her. It was, as I had often heard, by far the wisest and most prudent plan to humour mad people. I would try and humour her.

"Look," she said, "at your eyes and brows!"

I glanced up, and in my own brown orbs fear was most legibly written.

"Now look at mine. You see the colour and shape are the same, do you not?"

True; but her eyes glittered with a hard brilliancy that frightened me.

"Then," she continued, "note our features—nose, forehead, chin; they are exactly the same. I am twenty years your senior. You wear your hair differently to mine—it is much lighter; but anyone could tell at a glance that we were mother and daughter. Now give me your hand; it is precisely the same as mine in shape and size, even to the very nails. As to your foot, I know it is small, as small as this," exhibiting a dainty little satin shoe and open-worked stocking.

I remember with a pang of agony that seemed actually to contract my heart, one day—a day I could never forget—when, in spite of Peggy, I had tried on a pair of pretty fairy slippers, and how they had fitted.

"Still unbelieving, my daughter, in spite of the test of our two faces! Now you shall see the test of questions. Ask me what you will!"

"What was my birthday?"

"The fourth of May, eighteen hundred and sixty-two."

"What was my father's name—his second name?"

"Second name!" placing her hand to her head.

"John—John—it was an odd name. It began with a G. Stay, I have it—*Glasspole*! It was his godfather's name, and it brought him a nice little legacy. It came when we were at Lahore, and I remember he got a lovely landau all the way up from Calcutta. Is there anything else you would like to know?"

"Yes. There was a certain box kept in the store-room of our bungalow. My father would not allow it to be touched, because it contained things that had been my mother's. Tell me what its contents were, and then I will believe you."

"The contents of that dear old box! Nothing easier. I missed it frightfully, and many a day I languished for things that were therein. In the first place, a pink satin dress trimmed with Brussels lace; next a white satin. There was also a fancy costume in which I went as 'Folly' to the Governor's ball. Oh, dear! Oh, dear! There was also a habit—dark green—the opera cloaks—one red and gold—some fans, slippers, and odds-and-ends. The box was black, and had D.O.M. in brass nails on the lid—Diana Olivia Manners! I have long dropped the Diana, and as you may have noticed, sign myself Olive Lorraine. Now I see by your face that you are convinced."

I was beginning to believe in Lady Lorraine, now I had no desire. Big beads of perspiration stood upon my forehead. My knees trembled under me. My hands were damp and clammy.

"Is there anything else you would like to ask, my dear?"

"Yes—yes," I faltered. "If you are my mother, as you say, why did you abandon me? Why did you leave my father? Why did he always allow me to think that you were dead?"

"Ah, why, indeed! That is a long story. I shall tell you the whole of it another time. I think you have heard quite enough for one night. Come and kiss me, my daughter!"

I approached her timidly, and she took me in her arms and kissed me.

Little, little did I ever dream that I would receive a mother's embrace!

"Now that you know who I am, you must be to me a very daughter. I shall come and go as I please, and my dear Diana's husband may be as good as he likes; but he shall not shut the door upon his wife's mother, shall he?"

"Oh, mother, mother! Let me tell him, I implore you! I beseech of you! I cannot bear to keep this secret from him!"

"Remember your promise!—You shall tell him when I give you leave—no sooner! Do not forget that you owe duty and obedience to me as well as to him! Who in the whole world is so near to you as I am!"

I was dumb. It never occurred to me to say that for twenty years she had forsaken me, and that it was not to her I owed a tithe of obedience, love, or duty, till I learnt why she had been dead to me for so many years!

"When did you recognise me?" I faltered out at last.

"The night you wore the Begum's necklace—I knew it too well. It was mine once upon a time, and now it has been the means of restoring me my daughter. Your diamonds, Diana, have given you a mother. Well, I see you are agitated and overwrought—and no wonder! You have not my mental endurance or iron physique! You had better ring for your maid, and go to bed! I shall come and see you again shortly!"

As she was saying this she was once more wrapping herself up in her cloak, then she pulled the hood far over her head, kissed her hand, and opening the door went out and left me.

When I heard the hall-door close I got up, struggled over to the sofa, and flung myself down there, and lay as one who is dead; then tears came to my relief, and I wept.

Oh! how I wept, and why should I? I asked myself, angrily. Should I, so friendless save for Hugh, not be thankful to find that my mother was living, and such a mother as Lady Lorraine! And yet in my heart I could not rejoice.

Lady Lorraine, as my mother, was intolerable. Far rather would I believe my mother to be lying in her grave six thousand miles away across the sea.

Presently I heard a voice near me saying, in tones that I easily recognised,—

"Save us and send us, Miss Rance! What's all this about?"

It was Peggy, of course.

"Sit up, honey, and tell your old Peggy what ails you! Dear, dear, this is awful!" surveying my dishevelled appearance as I sat up and pushed my wet hair out of my eyes. "Och, hone, I see it all! You have had Lady Lorraine here with you this two hours, and she leaves you crying fit to break your heart! Rance, darling, did she tell you anything?" she added, in a whisper.

My lips quivered. I could not—dare not answer.

"I see she has!" said Peggy. "She has told you who she is! Oh! and my mind mis-gave me weeks ago, and I was right! Oh, it's herself come to trouble us again!" wringing her hands as she spoke. "Oh, what is to be done at all—at all! What did she tell you, Miss Rance?"

"What I have taken an oath never to reveal—not even to Hugh!"

"'Tis as well he should not know what you and I know, darling! Shure she is your mother!"

"Hush, Peggy, walls have ears! And you recognised her!"

"I knew she was alive, and grand and rich, and when I saw the lady that you showed your dress to—oh! but I got a shock, for I feared it was her, and then I hoped it was not! I just hoped and feared day after day, and that's what has kept me from going home to poor Tony! I dare not leave you to face her alone!"

"Ah, Peggy, think of what you are saying!"

"I do! I know it well! She has no more heart or feeling than a stone, and she works trouble for whoever has to deal with her! Thank goodness the regiment is soon going away to Ireland, and then you will be out of her road! Come, come away till I put you to bed!"

"Tell me first, Peggy, why you pretended she was dead! Why did father shut himself off from the world, if she was alive all the time?"

"He took you away to a lonely desert place, where you would see no one, and hear no bad things; and where you would have a chance of growing up unknown to her, and as unlike her as he could train you."

"And why did she go away?"

"Oh! for reasons you will hear again. Don't let her come over you with her beautiful eyes, and soft voice, and her tears. She is—Heaven forgive me for saying it to her own child—a wicked, heartless, faithless woman, who has no thought for anything in this wide world beyond herself. Now that's enough; go to bed, and go to sleep."

It was easy to go to bed, but go to sleep I could not. I cried stealthily, off and on, the

whole night, and next morning my appearance told a fine tale! My face was ashen-coloured; my eyelids and lips looked as though they had been sewn in with red worsted. Hugh was grieved—grieved that I would not tell him what was the matter. No—not in spite of his most tender and anxious inquiries.

"It is something serious, Rance; I've never known you cry yourself to this state, thank goodness, and you know I can't bear to see you shed even one tear. Come! Have you had a row with Ada Rose?"

"No."

"A scolding from Peggy?"

"No; don't be ridiculous."

"I see you won't tell me what is the matter, so I shall try and find out, my love!"

He was as good as his word, for when we met at lunch—after his return from barracks and orderly-room—the first of all regaled me with various little bits of news; then he told me a story that made me laugh, and then he said in the most casual manner,—

"These nocturnal visits from Lady Lorraine do not agree with you, my dear child. I cannot have her ladyship coming here after nine o'clock, making a sitting of two hours, and leaving my wife to cry all night. She has been telling you something unpleasant. What was it?"

I could not answer, and looked guiltily at my plate.

"Well, she shan't have a chance of telling you anything more, for I have told Morris just now that in future you are not at home to Lady Lorraine."

"Oh! Hugh—no, you haven't! Oh! surely you are joking!"

"Certainly not. I have my suspicions about her magnificent ladyship. I have heard something very fishy about her; and to please me, my darling, will you promise not to see her, or speak to her any more?"

In answer to this, I burst into tears, like the goose that I was, and thus evaded the necessity of making any direct reply.

"I am sure you must have had enough of her last evening to last you for life. Come, dry your eyes, and put on your hat, and I'll take you for a good long drive in the country. Mind you wear a veil, for if anyone meets us they will swear we have been having our first quarrel."

We had our first quarrel that same evening all the same—the first—and alas! alas! by no means our last!

CHAPTER XXXIII.

I WENT up stairs to bathe my eyes, and put on my hat, and scribbled off a note to Lady Lorraine—I could not call her mother. I commenced it just as usual, and said,—

"My husband says I am not to receive you here again. He knows nothing. I send you a line to prepare you; and if we are to meet you will have to plan how and where. Of course, it must be without Hugh's knowledge. Perhaps it would be better that we should not see each other for some time.—Yours, DIANA HALFORD."

This note I hastily scrawled and thrust into my blotter, not having time to address it, for Hugh was whistling and sounding the gong, and giving every sign of impatience.

"You have been ages!" he exclaimed, as I descended the stairs. "Have you been improving your complexion? Let me see—no! You are still ghastly, the country air will do you good. I have sent a line over to Torpichen—I see he is back—asking him to dinner. He will cheer you up, and tell you the latest news from Brayfield, and all the county gossip."

This was, indeed, kind and thoughtful of Hugh, for I knew in his heart that he was not partial to my cousin, and I believe still regarded him with a most foolish and ridiculous amount of jealousy.

Ralph had been away on a cruise, he had also run home to The Park, from whence choice consignments of fruit and flowers often reached me. I had not seen him for nearly two months,

and looked forward to a long talk with him that evening.

I was all the better for my country drive, and came in with bright eyes, a fresh colour, and a good appetite.

Before I dressed for dinner I folded, stamped, and addressed my note, and sent it to the post by my own maid. Then I attired myself carefully, and went down to the drawing-room to receive Ralph, and hear his news.

For a long time we enjoyed a *à la tête*, and after the first few questions and answers were over, he said rather suddenly, eyeing me keenly as he spoke,—

"How is your grand friend, Lady Lorraine? Do you see as much of her as ever?"

I became suddenly very red and confused, and stammered out "that I had seen her recently."

Looking me full in the face, and holding my eyes as it were with his, he said,—

"Have you ever heard who she was before she married Sir Roper Lorraine?"

I completely lost my self-control, and for the second time that day I burst into tears, and my tears in this instance spoke volumes.

"I see," he said, in a low voice. "You know. For my own part I recognised her at once. You are in a terribly awkward position, my poor little cousin. I pity you from the bottom of my heart."

What bad luck it was for me that just at this moment we were joined by Hugh. He heard Ralph say sympathetically, "My poor little cousin, I pity you from the bottom of my heart," and he found me in tears.

This curious coincidence he could not fail to notice. Why could he not have come sooner—or later? No one would have guessed from his manner that he had heard anything out of the common. He acquitted himself as host so well that I began to believe that my fears were groundless.

He sang, he played the guitar, and I sang, and then we both sang duets. I had had lessons recently, and my voice was much improved.

In due time Ralph took his departure, and I was about to take myself away to bed, when Hugh, just as I reached the door, called out,—

"Wait a moment, Rance. I have something to say to you."

I looked round. He was sitting in the same chair that she had occupied the previous night. I began to see there was something fatal in that chair to me.

"Come here," he said, in a tone that I was not used to.

"I asked you, to day, most particularly, to have nothing whatever to do with Lady Lorraine; and you promised me—at least I took silence for consent. Now I find, to my great concern, that you are not to be trusted. I met your maid going out with a letter in her hand this evening as I was coming in from the stables; and as it was raining I took it from her and put it in the pillar myself. I did not look at the address from any curiosity; you and I have no secrets between us—goodness knows, I have none from you—and when I glanced at the note I saw that it was addressed to Lady Lorraine. I posted it, but remember it is the last you will write her! Do you hear me Rance?" he added, sternly.

"Yes, I hear you. I am not deaf."

"Do you heed me?"

"No; I shall probably write to Lady Lorraine again, and if I said I would not I should be telling an untruth."

"Then you defy me!"

"Yes."

"And disobey me!" he said, in a firm low tone.

"Only in this—yes."

"Well, at any rate, you are candid. Do you think your candour will carry you so far as to tell me what you were saying to Ralph Torpichen this evening, in this very room? Why were you weeping, and why was he talking of a terrible position, and pitying from the bottom of his heart his poor little cousin?"

Dead silence.

"Diana, you must tell me, and I will know."

I raised my eyes and looked at him. I tried to speak, but I knew not what to say.

I was already suffering sorely for my promise. I would have given the world to retract it, and tell him all, but my lips were sealed.

"If this goes on, I shall go mad," I cried, suddenly casting myself into an easy chair. "I was surely born under an unlucky star."

"I shall go mad, too, if this goes on!" said Hugh, grimly. "My wife, who never had a secret from me, all of a sudden holds long interviews with two people—has some heavy burden on her mind, sheds tears with Lady Lorraine, and shares her secret with her, sheds tears with Ralph Torpichen, shares her secret with him, receives his sympathy, and I am left out in the cold! By Jove! I think it's enough to drive me mad!" And he began to walk about the room.

"If Ada Rose had your confidence I would not mind so much. She is an honest, good little creature, for all her feather head; but when your secret is shared with that well-known intriguer, Lady Lorraine, I know that it must be bad!"

"This I may tell you that it is not, it is harmless."

"Is it connected with that woman?"

"It is."

"And with you and Sir Ralph?"

"Yes."

"Ah!" I could give no idea of the angry scorn that Hugh threw into that "Ah!" It spoke volumes.

"I don't wonder now that your father kept you so strictly in the background. No doubt he had reason to believe in your aptitude for getting into hot water, and for carrying on intrigues with wealthy men and wicked women, who could turn your head with a few sugared compliments."

"Hugh," I cried, with a stamp of my foot, "how can you be so cruel? You know you don't mean what you say. How could I, a mere child, brought up in the wilds from infancy, never seeing a stranger till I met you, how can I possibly be what you say?"

"You may have only wanted opportunity. Doubtless the taint is in your blood! Your father was a good, honest gentleman; but how do I know what your mother was?"

"Oh, Hugh, dear Hugh!" I cried, clasping my hands. "Do not speak like this! If you knew all, instead of reproaching me you would pity me! Indeed you would!"

"Just as Ralph Torpichen does. Pity we all know is akin to love. He was your lover once. He would gladly have married you."

"He would; and had I been his wife he never would have spoken to me, or taunted me as you have done now. He is a gentleman!" I cried, in a towering passion.

"And I am not! Thank you!"

"Oh, Hugh!" I exclaimed, already dismayed at the yawning breach between us. "Have patience! Do not goad me to say such things! You joked to-day about our first quarrel! Is not this it?"

"And whose fault is it, pray? (It lies entirely with you to clear up the whole matter!) I will humbly beg your pardon if I have wronged you, Rance, and if I have allowed my hot temper to carry me too far. Only whisper two words in my ear! Only make me—your husband—as wise as strangers. Only tell me your secret!"

"I cannot!" I cried, wringing my hands in despair.

"I thought not," he returned, fiercely. "There is the test."

So saying he went out of the room, and slammed the door after him with a bang that shook the whole house.

After this Hugh did not speak to me for several days, and I was wretched. Peggy was in my confidence, and she did all in her power to console and support me.

I lived as it were, on the edge of a volcano. I had no taste for intrigue or secrets, and Lady Lorraine had. She delighted in snatching a few words from me in the street, in thrusting a note into my reluctant hand, in sending me letters inside books—music and flowers. These letters made me miserable. I dreaded them as I would



I WAS TREMBLING ALL OVER LIKE AN ASPEN-LEAF—CONVINCED I HAD TO DEAL WITH A MAD WOMAN.

a scorpion, for I never knew when one might drop out before Hugh.

There was never much in them, and it seemed to me that she wrote them out of a pure spirit of mischief and love of danger—danger that could not touch her; but I lived, as it were, in a powder mill.

One morning, a few days after our first quarrel, Hugh, who was now barely civil to me, said as we sat at breakfast,—

"I met a man yesterday who told me all about your precious confidante, Lady Lorraine. She is a divorced woman, and as heartless as she is bad."

My heart stood still. I put down my untasted cup, which rattled in the saucer.

Divorced! I had never thought of this, and my mother! I became crimson.

"Did you know that she ran away from an excellent husband, and forsook her two poor disgraced little children!—one of them in arms (that was I), and went away in a most cold-blooded manner with a scoundrel who was an old leaver!"

"No," I answered, disturbed.

"Since then she had been a kind of adventuress on the face of the globe, until good luck threw that old ass, Sir Roper, in her way. She married him, and turned over a new leaf. She found for a while that it paid to be good. But I am afraid, from what I hear, that she is at her old tricks again."

"Did you have her name?"

"No, but she is making her present one sufficiently notorious. And now, Diana, one word. The General here is going to take me as aide-de-camp to the Camp of Exercise, near Brighton. I tried to cry off, but it was no good. I don't want to leave you here with her alone. Promise me that you will not admit her into the house in my absence. Promise me that you will not write to her. I ask this pledge from you in remembrance of our old days by the Kharan. I say no more. Even if you don't mind me, think of your father. What would he have said had he known

that, in spite of me, you would take Lady Lorraine for your bosom friend? That you repose a confidence in her you refuse to me? What would he have said, I ask you!"

Of course I could not answer what he would have said, which would have been, "She is the girl's mother!" And I held my tongue.

"Will you give me your promise?" he urged, "and let me go off to my duty with a load off my mind? Come, Rance!"

"When are you going?"

"Immediately! My traps are packed. My charger has gone to the station. The dog-cart is waiting for me, and I am waiting for you."

"Yes, Hugh, I'll promise."

"And you won't break your word, as you did before! Mind, if you do I'll never forgive you!"

"Yes, you may depend on me this time, Hugh!"

"All right, then. Good-bye!" seizing his gloves.

"Come back! Come back!" I cried, running after him to the door. "You have forgotten something."

"What is it?" he asked, impatiently.

"Why to kiss me!" I said, lifting my face to him.

"Oh, is that it? Well, you are really so pretty I cannot resist you," stooping down and kissing me twice. "Good-bye, Rance. Now mind you are a good girl while I am away."

So saying he went out into the hall, lit a cigar, climbed into his dog-cart, and with a farewell shake of his whip to me drove rapidly away.

Decidedly I was getting back into his good graces. He called me "Rance" once more. Oh, that I could stay there! Oh, that fate and circumstances would kindly leave me alone!

I passed the morning practising Hugh's accompaniments, embroidering him a smoking cap, and making stern resolutions with regard to my parent. Resolutions, alas! that the first contact with her strong will and powers of persuasion

scattered to the fierce winds. But how I succumbed—how I got into deeper trouble than ever—must be told in a chapter to itself.

(To be continued.)

In China hens are used for hatching fish. The spawn is placed in egg-shells, hermetically sealed, and a hen is induced to sit on them. At the proper time the little fish are removed and put in carefully tended ponds.

WHILE electricity is certain to effect a very material saving in manufacturing, it has other uses quite as important. Where there is one factory, there may be hundreds of dwellings, and when the electric current can be introduced into these dwellings, its advantages will be manifold. As to economy, the Niagara Falls power has produced the most startling results. It costs but thirty-six dollars a year per horse-power for electricity used twenty-four hours in the day. This is much less than the cost of steam used ten hours a day. There are hopes that even these figures will be very materially reduced, and that new appliances will show new uses for electricity, and that we will not only have our houses lighted and heated by this means, but it will be able to perform many services automatically. One of the latest adaptations of electricity is its use in laundries. The irons are heated by electricity, and by proper regulation, a current is used which is absolutely uniform. All of the heat is utilised, and every stroke of the iron tells, as there is no waiting, or wondering or questioning if the iron is hot enough. Another great advantage is that it does not heat the room, as the radiation from the iron is not perceptible. Gas-heated irons violate the atmosphere, and the operators become weary and lack vitality. Where natural gas has heretofore been employed for heating irons, it is now used to generate electricity, and the change is of great advantage both financially and in point of health.



"AH!" SHELDON SAID, DRAWING A QUICK BREATH, "THIS, THEN, IS THE EXPLANATION OF THE MYSTERY."

UNA'S VOW.

—101—

CHAPTER XXV.

A DESPERATE EFFORT.

AND yet Una had to wait some hours before her vigil was rewarded, and the slipping of the bolt outside told her some one was on the threshold.

It proved to be Liza, looking dirtier and frowzier than ever, and with a strong smell of spirits and stale tobacco permeating her attire. She carried a tray on which were some slices of cold meat, and a large cup of hot coffee, and as she put it down there was a certain shamefacedness about her that prevented her from doing more than glance at Una from beneath her lowered lids.

"I'm sorry we snt bin near you for so long," she said, "we was prevented yesterday, and I can't stay now; but I'll come up and see you again later on."

"But tell me," Una began, eagerly. The woman shook her head as if to say it was impossible for her to listen, and before the girl had time to catch hold of her skirt even she had disappeared, fastening the door behind her, as she had done on her last visit.

The fragrant aroma of the coffee was more than welcome to poor Una, and she lost no time in drinking some of it. As it happened it was still so hot that she could not take much at a time—luckily for her, as subsequent events proved!

All her senses were fairly keen, but her sense of taste was especially so, and it struck her that there was a bitter flavour in the coffee which coffee ought not to have. She tasted it again, very cautiously, and her first impression was confirmed. Undoubtedly the beverage was drugged.

Involuntarily she pushed the cup away. What was the object in trying to drug her? Not a good one certainly—in all probability a very evil one. All her old fears that the darkness of last night had fostered rushed back upon her with redoubled

force. And now night was coming on again, and she would be entirely at the mercy of these two wretches, who could work their will on her undisturbed.

It is impossible to describe the terror that took possession of her, and yet the reader can readily imagine it when her position is remembered. Cut off from any possibility of rescue, alone with a man whom she knew to be unscrupulous, and a woman who was probably as bad.

How she blamed herself for putting any faith in Steve Hardy! But she had been reckless in her misery, and when we are reckless desperate measures don't frighten us.

She had no one to depend on save herself. It was her woman's wit matched against their strength and cunning.

She rushed to the door and looked it, for by a happy chance the key was on the inner side, Liza having secured it from the outside with a bolt as has already been stated. Then she put on her hat, which she had discarded the day before, and returned to the fireplace, which she anxiously once more examined.

It was very wide at the bottom, and for about ten feet above; but then it seemed to narrow suddenly, and the girl felt a horrible conviction that she could not possibly pass through such a constricted space.

Nevertheless she began to climb upwards, quite regardless of the soot and old mortar that was falling around, and that threatened to choke her with the dust.

Her old acrobatic training stood her in good stead, and luckily she had kept herself active by long walks and constant exercise, so that the mere feat of climbing presented very few difficulties to her, especially as she was aided by the projecting bricks. But, alas! when she reached a certain point in the chimney she found that it was indeed too narrow to give her the faintest hope of squeezing through.

Thus brought to a standstill despair seized her. This had been her only hope, and now that

it was proved futile there was nothing for her but to descend.

As she prepared to do so she noticed that on her right there was a wide sort of niche, and beyond it a kind of tunnel, so dark that it might easily have escaped observation.

She remembered stories she had read of priests hiding in chimneys, and of secret passages leading thence into the open air, and it struck her that as this was a very old house it might easily contain such hiding places.

Hope sprang up once more. She determined to investigate this narrow tunnel, although to do so she had to lie flat, and crawl on her hands and knees, for it was only just wide enough to permit of her progress in this way.

At last it came to an end. She could not tell how long it was, but she judged somewhere about eighteen or twenty feet, and in all probability it ran between the ceiling of the room she had just left and the floor of an upper one. But now she could find no outlet, and there was not the faintest beam of light to guide her. All she could do was to patiently pass the tips of her fingers all round the passage in the hope of discovering spring or bolt—for it was clear there must be an outlet somewhere or the tunnel would not have been constructed.

Yes, at last she came upon a small knob which seemed to be of iron from the feel of it, and this she pressed, and pushed and turned for some time before it responded to her efforts. At length however, it seemed to slip in a groove, and with some difficulty she pushed it back, with the result of also pushing back a board. A square aperture was revealed large enough for a man to squeeze through.

Needless to say it did not take Una long to emerge from the tunnel. What a delight to stand upright once more after the uncomfortable position she had lately occupied. She found herself in a small dark closet, which might have been used as a linen or store cupboard, and which led into a room of fair dimensions, but whose sloping

roof told it was at the top of the house. It was quite empty, and the door was half open.

Una's first action was to go to the window and look out. She was above the high wall here, and could see the river carrying its dark tide seawards, and the faint outline of ships lying at anchor. But it was nearly dark and the night overclouded, neither stars nor moon were visible. She was glad of this, since it gave her so much better a chance of escaping observation.

She took off her boots and held them in her hands, so as to creep about the more gently, and then visited in turn each of the rooms on the top landing to see if there was any prospect of getting away by means of the roof. A very short investigation was sufficient to convince her that there was not; for the house was a detached one, with a sloping roof, and the lead piping had been stolen from it years ago. Her only resource, therefore, would be to get downstairs and contrive to slip out of either the front or back entrance.

Very cautiously she descended the stairs, which were old and rotten, and often creaked even under her light weight. At each sound she would stop in affright to listen with a beating heart, for any sign of its having been heard by her gaolers. But no one interfered with her till she got to the bottom and found herself standing in the hall, to which she had been led by Hardy yesterday morning. Yesterday morning! Why it seemed weeks ago!

Before her was the door by which she had come in. She almost ran towards it in her eagerness, and was just on the point of opening it when she heard the jingle of a key outside. It was someone (probably Hardy, she thought), in the act of inserting his latch-key in the lock.

With noiseless footsteps she ran back again to the end of the hall, and the moment she reached it the front door opened. She had only been just in time, and even now discovery seemed imminent; for there was nowhere for her to hide, and in a minute the new-comer would be upon her. Her only resource was to run down the flight of stairs into the basement, and this she did.

But luck seemed against her, for the woman Liza had just been to look out at the back door, and, after closing it, was coming along the lower passage with a candle in her hand to light Hardy downstairs; for she had heard the banging of the front door and judged it was he who had just arrived.

Una must either face her or take refuge in a room at the bottom of the stairs, the door of which was ajar.

She chose the latter alternative; but her heart sank when she saw where she was. She had actually entered the ordinary living room of the occupants of the house—an apartment that was half-kitchen, half-parlour; and that, at the present moment, reeked of the odour of fried onions.

But there was no turning back. Liza, who, so far, did not suspect her presence, was standing at the foot of the stairs with the candle held high above her head, while Hardy stumbled along with many oaths at the awkwardness of the descent.

Una looked round her in desperation, and her eye fell on a heap of what looked like feminine garments—dresses, jackets, mantles, piled up in a corner.

In a moment she had crept under them, knowing well that her hiding place was of the most insecure, and that the chances were she would be discovered, but determining to make a bold struggle for liberty, even if she should be ignominiously dragged forth.

Of course she was able to hear all the conversation that passed, but for some time after their entrance into the kitchen the man and woman seemed too engrossed in the task of eating the steak Liza had withdrawn from the oven, to have much time for talking, and it was not until his hunger was appeased, and he had begun to smoke his filthy little clay pipe that Steve Hardy said,—

"I s'pose it's all right about the girl!"

"Yes; leasways I expect so. I put the stuff in the coffee, and a little while after crept up to

see if she was stirring. I couldn't hear a sound; so I guess she's fast asleep."

"Why didn't you see, to make sure?"

"Because she'd locked the door inside, and I couldn't get in."

"You oughter have took the key."

"I daresay!" snapped the woman. "I oughter remember everything, oughtn't I! But if it comes to that, your memory ain't anything to boast of; and I think I've done pretty well—especially as I don't like the business."

"What business?"

"Why, about the girl. If you'd take my advice, you'd get her cash and let her go."

"And have the peelers on me within a week?"

No, Liza, you're a deal too chicken-hearted. Dead men tell no tales; and as she's insensible she won't feel anything. I tell you that jewellery of hers—her bracelet, and rings, and watch and chain will bring us fifty pounds, to say nothing of what's in her purse. It'll be a good haul; and remember this—it'll be our own! No dividing it with the rest."

The woman was silent, and after a pause Hardy continued, in a grumbling tone,—

"I only got five quid for my share of Tuesday night's work; and yet it was me that did it all. Of course it was easy enough; the servants downstairs having their supper, the walls in the drying-room, and the dining-room left with all the silver and plate. I had only to walk in and shove it in the sack; still, there was a risk, and it was me that took it. I think this diamond business is pulled off I shall give my own look again; there's more satisfaction in it."

"Not when you get your share of what the others work for," returned Liza, significantly; "but I couldn't understand about Tuesday night. I didn't know you'd got anything on down in H-shire."

"No more we had, leasways, not in our ordinary line. I went down with Sandy Jim, on the track of the great Australian millionaire, Sheldon, but somehow, when we got near Oakenhurst, we managed to miss him, so we parted to go different ways, and I chanced to see a 'orse and cart standing outside a big house, and it give me the idea of having a little game of my own. Well, I managed to get the swag, and stow it away in the cart, and it was when I was hiding in a lane, waiting for the d-d policeman to go by, that this girl sprung upon me. I was so took aback, you might have knocked me down with a feather."

He paused to take a long pull at a pewter pot containing beer, and when he had finished this pleasing operation, smacked his lips approvingly. Evidently his meal had made him talkative.

"It's a big thing, this Sheldon business," he observed, thoughtfully, as he knocked the ashes out of his pipe preparatory to refilling it, "and it's a risky one, too. It is to be pulled off to-night. I ain't sorry as I ain't in it."

"To-night!" echoed the woman, in tones of eager curiosity; "I suppose they're still after the diamond?"

"Of course they are, and its worth the risk, the biggest diamond in the world!"

"But they'll have to cut it up!"

"Yes, they'll have to cut it up; but even then there'll be some good big'uns to send over to Amsterdam. That diamond's worth a hundred thousand pounds—a hundred thousand pounds," he repeated, unctuously. "Sheldon had it with him when he went down into H-shire on Tuesday, and if we'd have any luck we should have got it then. But its safe enough to-night, and this time to-morrow it'll be on its way to Dutchland."

"How have they fixed it up?" queried Liza, lazily.

"Why, it's like this. Sheldon lives in Park-lane, and one of our pals managed to get engaged to him as footman a few days ago. He sent word that he thought his master intended to hook it soon, and that made the captain hurry up matters, and Sandy Jim is to be let into the house to-night between three and four o'clock."

"It'll be an easy job, then?"

"Not it, don't you make no mistake. Sheldon always carries the diamond hung round his neck in a little box, on a steel chain, and he sleeps

with a revolver under his pillow, so he's not an easy customer to deal with, not by no manner of means, and if Sandy Jim can't quiet him before he wakes it'll be the worse for Sandy Jim."

This was said so significantly that there was not the least difficulty in understanding what "quieting him" meant.

An interruption to these confidences came in the shape of the striking of the cheap little American clock on the mantel piece. It was nine o'clock, and the sound recalled to Steve Hardy's mind this fact that there were other matters to attend to, now that he had digested his supper. He put down his pipe, and stretched his arms above his head as he rose.

"We'll go up to the girl now. I s'pose the lock'll have to be forced," he remarked. "Where are the tools?"

The woman seemed to reflect a moment; then she said, suddenly,—

"Why, bless it, they ain't up in the corner there, under that heap of clothes. I brought the clothes down to sort 'em out, and see what I'd keep for myself," she added, as Stephen made some impatient remark on the "litter."

How the heart of the poor listener, crouching close up against the wall, under the pile of garments, beat as these words were spoken! Discovery seemed inevitable, and what her fate would be, the conversation she had overheard made it easy enough to predict. And there was no way of escape, none! She was caught as a rat in a trap. So terrible was the suspense of the first few moments that followed, and so great the tension on her nerves, that she had much ado to restrain herself from springing up and exclaiming,—

"Here I am—do your worst!"

She could hear the man stumbling across the kitchen, she could distinguish his loud breathing as he approached nearer, and smell the odour of his tobacco-stained attire. He kicked aside some of the garments that covered her, and his foot touched her arm. Then his eye was caught by some tools lying on the dresser.

"Here's a chisel, that'll do," he observed. "It won't take more nor that to open the door. But jest you clear away all this rubbish, or it'll be the worse for you," he added, threateningly.

"All right, I'll clear it up some time to-night," was her answer, as in obedience to his command she took a candle to light him in his work. Their footsteps echoed as they ascended the basement stairs, but it was not until she heard them crossing the hall that Una dared venture from her place of concealment, thanking Heaven for this chance that their absence gave her.

It would take Hardy some little time to pick the lock of the door; how thankful Una was for the inspiration that had made her turn the key! and when he said Liza discovered the absence of their captive they would probably search the upstairs rooms first, in the hope of finding her; therefore the girl's safest plan would be to try and get out by means of the back door, instead of the one in the hall through which she had entered the house.

With velvet-shod footsteps she crossed the kitchen and got out into the passage. Arrived there, she had to grope her way along, for there was not the faintest glimmer of light except the reflection of the fire from the kitchen itself. Upstairs she could hear the muttering of voices, and the ring of the chisel against metal which told her that Hardy had set to work in good earnest.

She seemed to herself in a sort of nightmare, as her fingers fumbled with the chain and bolts securing the basement door. Never before had she felt herself so awkward; her fingers were all thumbs, and it appeared an age before she had undone the various fastenings, and a soft breath of rainy air blowing in her face, told her she was really on the verge of freedom.

But there were other difficulties to be surmounted outside; for although she had left the house, the high wall still stood between her and liberty, and the question now was—how was she to scale it? True, it had a door, but the door was locked, and the key gone.

She glanced round in desperation. If there were only a ladder, or steps by which she could

get up the wall, she would trust to fate as to what there might be on the other side. But neither of these household appendages met her gaze, and the nearest approach to them consisted of a couple of old barrels in the last stage of decrepitude, lying in a corner, and waiting to be chopped up for firewood. They were a last resource, and if they failed her the girl knew she would be completely stranded.

As quickly and quietly as she could she piled one on the top of the other, and then, hastily slipping on her shoes—which up to now she had been carrying, she began to mount, aiding herself by the irregularities of the bricks, and the holes in the mortar. It was a difficult, and indeed a dangerous attempt, for the wood was old and rotten, and threatened every minute to give way under her, and precipitate her to the ground; but she kept on pluckily, reminding herself of the terrible alternative lying before her, and sending up an involuntary prayer to Heaven for aid.

At last! She had reached the top, and was clinging to the coping. At the same moment she heard the sound of excited voices, as the door was thrown open, and Steve Hardy appeared on the threshold. His sudden cry of triumph told at once that he saw her.

CHAPTER XXVI.

A WARNING.

"Come back!" shouted Hardy, the moment his eyes fell on the black-robed figure, hardly visible in the darkness. "You'll break your neck if you fall, and if you come back quietly I'll let you go—honour bright, I will!"

But Una preferred trusting to chance rather than "honour" of such a very questionable kind as Mr. Stephen Hardy's. The wall was high, she knew, and what was on the other side she did not know; nevertheless she was wrought to such a pitch of excitement as to be well-nigh reckless, and her only reply to his entreaty was to clamber over the other side. In the momentary pause that ensued she tried to distinguish what was below, but the darkness was too dense, and so, after another prayer, she loosed her hold of the stone, and let herself fall as lightly and gently as she could.

She fell into water.

Yes, the rains had swollen the river until at high tide it came up to the very wall of the houses. It was not deep, and after a little floundering about Una stood upright and looked about her. She could see the dark outline of ships and barges, and the lights of the opposite shore, but she had not the faintest idea of where she was—nor did she much care, since if she could only escape from Stephen Hardy's clutches she did not doubt her ability of finding her way once more into the haunts of civilization. On her right was the door in the wall, which she had failed to open, and every minute she expected to see the evil face of Hardy appear at it. On her left, at a little distance, was a flatish-bottomed boat, secured by a thick rope to a ring in the wall, and the sight of this gave her an idea. A few seconds later she had clambered over the side and untied the rope, which was easily enough done, as the knot that secured it was a loose reef knot. Two short oars, or paddles lay across the thwart, and with these she turned the nose of the boat upstream, and began pulling as quickly but as silently as she could, keeping well in the shadow where the tide was slackest, and thankful for the darkness that would conceal her whereabouts from Hardy. On consideration, she did not think he would attempt to follow her, once she got clear of the vicinity of his house; besides she had assured herself there was no other boat near at hand, and he would be uncertain as to the direction she had taken; most probably he would decide she had gone down stream, as it would be so much easier to make progress that way than pulling against the tide.

With every moment her hope and courage rose higher, though her garments were wet with the ducking she had had, and even now the

rain was pouring down over her shoulders. But these were very minor matters compared with her wretched fears during the last forty-eight hours.

"Boat ahoy!"

The cry came to her just in time to avoid a collision, and the man who had spoken peered curiously at her in the darkness.

"Where's your light, my gal! You've no business to be about without one at this time of night."

The tone of his voice was hearty and reassuring, the boat he was in about the size of her own.

"I know I haven't got a light. I'll give you half-a-crown if you'll tow me up a little way, and put me ashore."

He seemed surprised at the request, but at once complied with it.

"All right. Throw us over your painter. Where d'ye want to land—Limehouse?"

She answered in the affirmative, not knowing indeed anything of the locality he mentioned, but only anxious to find herself on *terra firma*, and away from all risk of meeting Hardy. While she was being towed along her mind was busy with the conversation she had overheard while she lay hidden in the kitchen.

It was clear to her that Hardy was one of a gang of thieves, whose object now was to rob this Mr. Sheldon, whoever he might be, of a certain diamond which they knew to be in his possession, and the date of the robbery had been fixed for this very night.

That the thieves were prepared to resort to desperate extremes was quite certain from what Hardy had said, and it seemed to Una nothing less than her duty to warn the gentleman of the plot against him.

But how should she do it?

The easiest way seemed to be to go to the nearest police station and lodge her information; but this meant betraying her own identity, which was an alternative she was by no means inclined to adopt.

Outside this, there only remained going to Mr. Sheldon, and warning him in person.

She had decided on this latter plan just as the boat touched the quay, and she landed.

When she gave the man who had rowed his premised half-a-crown she asked him to secure her own boat to a buoy, and without waiting to see whether he did it or not, she hurried away, wondering whether her wet skirts were likely to attract notice.

She need not have feared; people, for the most part, were too intent on their own affairs to pay much attention to her; besides, it was such a wet night that soaked garments were the rule rather than the exception.

Presently she saw a policeman, well wrapped up in a macintosh, coming towards her, and she stopped him to ask the way to the nearest railway station.

He gave the required information, and looked after her a trifle curiously as she passed on, but although he wondered what brought her there alone at such an hour his inquisitiveness did not take an active form, and Una pursued her path uninterrupted.

It seemed to her a long way to the station; but at last it was reached, and she asked for a ticket to Park-lane—which she remembered Hardy had mentioned as where Sheldon lived.

The booking-clerk smiled, and told her she could not go straight to Park-lane; but he brought out a map and showed her where it was, advised her what station to book to, and what omnibus to take when she got there.

He was, indeed, so kind and polite that she was emboldened to ask if he knew anything of a Mr. Sheldon who lived there.

His answer was given with vivacity. Everybody knew—or had heard of—Mr. Sheldon, the millionaire.

He had not been in London long, but his wealth was said to be fabulous, and he was as careful over a sovereign as any man who had to labour for his daily bread.

He—the clerk—did not know exactly in what part of Park-lane he lived, but there would not

be the least difficulty in finding out when the young lady got there.

But she would be very late, wouldn't she! It was close on eleven o'clock now.

It was after midnight when Una found herself driving in a hansom along Piccadilly on her way to the millionaire's house.

The cabman knew his name directly she mentioned it, and set her down in front of a palatial dwelling, which was in darkness save for the light in the hall. Suppose everybody had gone to bed, what should she do!

For the first time Una began to realise the difficulty of her mission, but she had arrived at a stage when difficulties cease to daunt, and she rang a loud peal at the bell with all the assurance she could muster.

It was answered after a decent interval by a footman, who looked at her suspiciously, and asked her her business with Mr. Sheldon. This, of course, she declined to state.

"But it is of the utmost importance," she added, showing him a sovereign, "and I am quite willing to pay for the trouble I give you in taking my message."

The gold proved an "Open Sesame," and a little while after she found herself in the presence of an unusually tall man, with an inscrutable, weather-beaten face, who looked at her to the full as suspiciously as his servant had done.

He was sitting in front of a desk, engaged, as it seemed, over some newspaper report, on which he kept his finger, as if to mark the place. Evidently he intended her visit to be a short one.

"What can I have the honour of doing for you, madam?" he asked, stiffly, his eye travelling rapidly over her dragged attire—of which poor Una became at once overwhelmingly conscious.

"Nothing. I am here on your behalf, not my own."

His eyebrows went up superciliously.

"Indeed! And the nature of your business?"

"Is to warn you that your house will probably be broken into to-night, and a valuable diamond taken away."

Then it became clear she had made an impression. His hand went up to his chest, and Una remembered what Hardy had said about his wearing the jewel in a bag round his neck.

He went to the door and looked out to assure himself there were no eavesdroppers; when he returned he drew forward an arm-chair towards the small fire that was burning in the grate, and beckoned the girl to take it, seating himself opposite to her.

"Now please tell me exactly what you mean, and how you became possessed of your information," he said, a certain tone of authority in his voice.

"I will do so," she replied, steadily; "but first of all I must exact a promise that the part I have taken in the matter shall be kept secret. I do not wish to tell you my name, and I do not wish to have to give evidence, supposing you contrive to arrest these men. All I wish to do is to warn you, and then you must let me go—do you agree?"

He hesitated, but finally gave the required promise, and then she repeated to him what she had heard Hardy say.

"Yes, it is true I have a new footman—not the one who let you in, but an older man," he observed, thoughtfully, when she finished. "By the way, I will go and see where he is now—not that I shall say a word to him of what you have just told me, only it will be as well to keep an eye on him. Stay here, if you don't mind, till I come back."

He was not long away, but when he returned the sight that met his gaze was alarming enough.

Una was lying back in her chair, as pale as death, while her trembling hands grasped a newspaper, on which her eyes were fixed in horrified dismay.

"What is the matter?" Sheldon asked, hurrying towards her, "are you ill?"

She shook her head and pointed to the head-

ing of a column, on which was printed in large letters—

"Shocking murder of the Countess of Carstairs."

"Disappearance of the murderer."

"Well!" he said, looking at her curiously, "what about it?"

"It is not true, it cannot be true!" Una exclaimed, in uncontrollable agitation, "Lady Carstairs dead—Lady Carstairs, who—" she stopped suddenly, on noticing the expression of his face.

"It is true—unfortunately," he answered, after a moment's pause. "Did you know her?" An affirmative movement of the head. "Perhaps, then, you knew also the woman who is accused of killing her—Mrs. Alec Beresford!"

The words had an effect he had not anticipated.

Una sprang to her feet, and faced him with horror-struck eyes, then she threw out her hands with a gesture of wild appeal, and before he could catch her, she had fallen at his feet in a dead faint.

Luckily he was a man used to emergencies, and knew exactly what to do.

When Una regained consciousness she was lying flat on a couch, with an odour of burnt linen close to her nostrils, and some drops of brandy, which she had not swallowed, falling from the corners of her mouth.

She pulled out her handkerchief to wipe them away; but the handkerchief was gently taken from her, and Sheldon held it to the light, and looked keenly at the name in the corner before restoring it to her.

"Ah!" he said, drawing a quick breath, "this, then, is the explanation of the mystery—you are Alec Beresford's missing wife."

CHAPTER XXVII.

A NEW OUTLOOK.

UNA was too overwrought to make any attempt to deny Sheldon's charge; she had gone through so much during the last few days that it seemed to her she was powerless to struggle any longer. Fate must do with her what it chose.

She lay quite still on the couch, her face looking as if it had been cut in white marble, against the dark rich velvet of the cushion he had just put to support her head.

Her hair lay in a tumbled luxuriance about her shoulders, her eyes were circled with purple rims, telling of anxiety and sleepless nights; there was something pathetic in the extreme youth and extreme languor of the delicate face.

"Good Heavens!" Sheldon exclaimed, involuntarily, "how like you are to your mother."

"My mother!" she repeated, raising her head, and wondering whether she had not misunderstood him. "Surely you know nothing about her."

"On the contrary, I know a good deal; but this is not the moment to tell you how I became possessed of my knowledge. Your own position demands instant consideration—the other can wait."

She sat upright on the couch, and put her hand to her brow to push back her hair, while she continued to gaze at him in a half bewildered manner, that told him she had not yet fully regained her senses. He took up the newspaper and pointed to it.

"I was reading this when you came in—a strange coincidence, was it not? And you, I suppose, knew nothing about it till you saw this account a few minutes ago?"

"Nothing at all—how could I know! As I sat in that chair after you left the room my eyes fell on the two head lines, because they were printed in big letters; but even yet I don't understand how it is I am suspected of having anything to do with the murder."

"Read it," he said, briefly, "and then you will understand better."

He watched her while she obeyed him, and no change of expression in the sweet face was lost upon him.

He saw that she was absolutely dumfounded at the crime of which she was suspected, and told himself no one but a fool could imagine a woman with a face like that guilty of murder.

"Well!" he said, as, having finished reading the report, she laid down the paper.

"I don't know what to do," she said, pitifully. "I had better go back to Eakenhurst, I think, and declare my innocence."

"What made you leave?" he asked, abruptly. A deep red stained the girl's face and throat; her fingers nervously interlaced, and for a moment she did not speak.

"I had good reasons," she said, at length; "at least, I believed them to be good ones."

"And do those reasons still exist?" She shook her head.

No, since Lady Carstairs was dead the sacrifice she contemplated would be in vain.

Did Alec, too, believe her guilty? she wondered—and the mere thought of it made her cheeks grow still whiter. That would be the cruellest wrong of all.

Sheldon walked the length of the room and back again before he spoke. He seemed to be thinking deeply to judge from the deep furrow on his brow. Presently he came to his former seat and drew it nearer to the couch on which she was still sitting.

"Listen to me," he said, impressively. "This is a difficult situation; but I will do my best to get you out of it. You have rendered me a signal service to-night, not only in preventing my diamond being stolen from me, but most likely in saving my life. The men who intend breaking in this house to-night belong to a most desperate gang, well known to the police, although the police have never succeeded in arresting them. I have known for some time that I was being 'shadowed'; but I am not a nervous man, and I always carry a revolver here"—he touched his breast pocket; but the movement seemed to suggest something unpleasant for he frowned, and made a pause before he went on. "Now I want to show my gratitude to you, and it seems to me the best way I can do it will be to help you to leave England at once, for I am bound to say the circumstantial evidence connecting you with this crime will be hard to disprove. Mind, I do not believe you guilty, you have not the face and manner of a guilty person; but facts are stubborn things and take a lot of getting over, and the only way in which you could prove your innocence would be by proving another person's guilt."

"And why should I not do that?"

"Because," he returned, slowly, "the result would, as far as I can see, be to place your husband in the position which you are now supposed to occupy."

Una fell back against the cushions with a stifled shriek. Her brain still felt dizzy, and she was unable to argue clearly. She seemed to be in a labyrinth of horrors, and whichever way she looked she was met by some grisly fear. It is likely enough that Sheldon was quite aware of her state of mind; but he was really sincere in his desire to do her a good turn, and especially so, since the doing of it fell in with his own plans. For a few minutes there was silence between them; then Una rose, and with uncertain footsteps, went towards the table on which her hat and veil were lying.

"I must go," she said, more to herself than him, and with trembling fingers, she began untying the knots in the veil. He came towards her and gently took it out of her hands.

"And where will you go to, may I ask?"

"An hotel, I suppose."

"Look at the time," pointing to an Empire clock standing on a bracket, "no respectable hotel would take you in at such an hour as this, especially as you have no luggage with you, and you can't roam the streets all night. You must stay here. I will call up my housekeeper, who is a good worthy soul, and place you in her charge. Believe me, it is the best thing to do."

It was the only thing for Una was really unfit to battle any longer against the fate that seemed to have treated her so hardly.

Her imprisonment and lack of food, combined with the mental anxiety she had gone through,

were now having their effect, and it was likely enough the ducking she had had earlier in the evening, and the fact of sitting in wet clothes, added to it.

When a round faced, rosy woman, with black eyes, and a figure like a tub came in, and took her in charge the girl felt herself powerless to resist.

Mrs. Grimes had not cared for being called up out of her comfortable bed to attend to unknown females, but she was a kind-hearted creature, and the minute her eyes fell on the pale-faced girl, her sympathies were enlisted.

"Poor lamb! she looked as if she was just ready to fade away like snow in sunshine," she said afterwards, when describing the scene to the butler, and she took Una to a luxurious bedroom with pale seagreen hangings, which seemed as if it might be the favourite haunt of a sea nymph. Mirrors and pictures were interspersed on the wall, and the toilet table was a mass of silver richly chased and engraved, while the bed looked most inviting with its satin eiderdowns, and wonderfully embroidered linen.

For two nights Una had not known the comfort of sleeping in a bed, so it is little wonder that almost directly her head touched the pillow she sank into a heavy sleep, from which she did not awake until the beams of the sun were trying to make their way through the drawn curtains.

At first she did not quite know where she was, but a moment later the sight of Mrs. Grimes' good-humoured countenance standing by the bedside with a silver tray on which was a dainty little tea set, recalled to her the events of the preceding night.

"I slept very well indeed, thank you," she said in reply to the housekeeper's inquiries, then she added anxiously, "Is Mr. Sheldon all right?"

"Yes, but he's had a disturbed night, for about three o'clock the house was broken into. You needn't look so alarmed, nobody was hurt, for the master was quite prepared, and there were at least a dozen policemen about the place. The burglars made a desperate resistance; but they were caught right enough, and marched off to the Police-station, and Rayner with them. Rayner is our last new policeman," Mrs. Grimes continued in explanation, "and a thorough bad lot too. But never you mind about him, ma'am; you just drink your tea and eat a bit of bread-and-butter—it's as thin as a wafer—and then I'll see to having your bath prepared."

Una did as she was bid, and soon afterwards got up. Her bath refreshed her, and her clothes she found had all been dried ready for her to put on.

Mr. Sheldon had said he would like to speak to her as soon as she felt equal to it, and, accordingly, she was taken to him in his study—the same room into which she had been ushered the previous night.

After a few kindly inquiries about her health he gave her a short account of the attempted entrance of the burglars, which was substantially the same as Mrs. Grimes had already told her, and then he approached her own concerns.

"I see by this morning's paper that matters are in exactly the same state at Eakenhurst, and I am more than ever convinced that you will do wisely to stay away," he said. "Of course you are a free agent, and you will act as you think best; still, I would remind you that I am a good deal older than you, and knocking about the world has given me a very fair knowledge of its ways. You may ask what right I have to advise you, and I answer that before you were born I knew your mother—and loved her. Some day I may tell you all about it, not now," he added hastily, seeing that she was on the point of questioning him. "It is a long story, and we have no time to spare. I merely mentioned it because I thought it would show you that, independently of what you did for me last night, I take an interest in you, and am willing to do my utmost on your behalf. As you know, I am rich, and rich men can carry out their plans with less difficulty than poor ones."

"But what do you advise me to do?" she asked, her voice trembling a little.

"To leave England without delay, and remain away until you can come back with safety."

Meanwhile I will employ a private detective, who will sift the affair of the murder to the bottom, and if it should turn out that Alec Beresford is really the criminal—well, then I suppose you will have no desire to return, but if not, you can still come back and prove your innocence. I have thought the matter over very seriously, and that is the conclusion I have come to."

"And where do you think I had better go?"

"To South America."

"South America!"

"Yes, because there is no extradition treaty, and you cannot be brought back even if you are traced; not, however, that there is the least likelihood of such a thing happening, for if my plans are only fairly lucky no one will for a moment suspect your identity."

"It is such a long way—such a very long way to go alone," she faltered.

"You would not go alone. I should go with you."

"You!"

"I. You see I am a man of leisure. I have no business engagements—nothing in fact to prevent me from doing what I like, and going where I will; therefore I have made up my mind to travel out with you, and see you safely placed before I think of leaving you. You will travel as my niece, and that will prevent any sort of suspicion arising. But remember," he added, impressively, "you are a free agent, and you shall have a free hand. If you don't want to leave England, I shall not persuade you to do so, though I still think it is the best thing you can do. As for me, I am quite disinterested, but I owe my life to you, and it is my duty as well as my pleasure to endeavour to repay the debt."

Una leaned her head on her hand and tried to think calmly. It was a terrible position to be in—that of an accused murderess, and Sheldon made out that it would be well-nigh impossible to prove her innocence. She believed him to be sincere too, and indeed, what object had he to gain by trying to deceive her?

At last she raised her head, and looked at him.

"I will do as you think best," she said, in a low voice—and she little thought how momentous was the choice she was making.

He came over to her gravely, and raised her hand to his lips, kissing it as he might have kissed his queen's.

"You have done wisely, my dear child. Now you can leave the rest to me. Believe me, I will be as careful of you as if you were my own daughter. You will stay quietly indoors and rest, while I go to make the necessary arrangements—for I need hardly tell you that the sooner we start the better."

And so it came about that late that same night, the great Australian millionaire and his reputed niece were travelling to Southampton, to be in time for a ship which sailed early the next day. And a few hours later Una was on deck, watching with streaming eyes the white cliffs of the land, in which was left behind everything she held dear.

Where, and under what altered circumstances, would she behold it again?

As she stood leaning over the bulwark a kindly hand was laid on her shoulder, and Sheldon's voice said,—

"No regrets, little woman! You are going to a new and happy life, and you leave sadness behind."

She shook her head slowly.

"I think I have ceased to expect happiness—I shall be satisfied if I find peace."

"Ah, you think so now, because your heart is sore, and you have gone through so much lately. But you are young, and while there is youth there is hope. Come, take my arm, and we will walk round the deck, you will get cold if you stay in one place so long."

She obeyed, and as they turned away a man rose from a low deck chair, where he had been sitting unobserved, and gazed after them with a very curious expression. He wondered whether he was on the right track or not.

(To be continued.)

WHICH IS THE HEIRESS?

—101—

CHAPTER LIII.

WYNDHAM POWIS went home a changed being after that talk with the kind-hearted matron. He had found that the girl whom he had set his heart upon seeing was within the walls he had just left.

Before starting homeward he stood watching the structure that had sheltered her for hours. Never while life lasted would he forget the solemnity of that hour; and when he turned away it seemed that he was parting with the other half of his soul. He wandered off mechanically, scarcely knowing whether he was going, only that he was going farther and farther away from her, his memory busy with that strange past that had worked such marvellous changes about him.

What was he bound to do! To forget her after he had gone there and seen her once or twice! He asked himself the question, looking the matter seriously in the face for the first time. Until then he had not thought of the meeting that must in turn be followed by parting.

"Give up the temptation of looking upon that beautiful, girlish face yonder," whispered a voice within him, "before it is too late!"

But he could not—he could not think of her passing from those walls without his seeing her, conversing with her.

The girl was never out of his thoughts after that. He did everything but reflect upon what the consequences of such an attachment would be for him in the after-days.

Wyndham Powis could not rest that night. His thoughts were of the girl whom he had left at the hospital. His mind was filled with thoughts that were at conflict with each other. He usually disliked and dreaded solitude, but that night his heart and soul desired it. He wanted to think of someone outside of the set he had hitherto mingled with.

He acknowledged to himself that he would not have one hour's peace until he had seen and conversed with the beautiful unknown girl of the accident, and the sooner the better for his peace of mind.

What would Beatrice say if she could but read his thoughts! He wondered, vaguely. She would be sure to insist that an interest for another, however slight, was a painful injury to herself, and it would grieve the proud, imperious beauty until her heart grew sick with dread and fear, for which he would be responsible.

That possibility was not a pleasant one for him to think of. He groaned aloud as he contemplated the consequences.

Lord Powis was by nature good and true—generous in his principles.

He had pitied Beatrice for the great love—unreturned—which she bore for him, and a rash and hasty engagement had followed, which he now began to see was to wreck his whole after-life. He had commenced to grow sorry, though he would not acknowledge it even to himself. He had believed himself changed a short time before, but by these turbulent thoughts he believed himself doubly changed now.

He was too noble to entertain anything but perfect sincerity and truth towards Beatrice, however. Yet, try as he would, he could not shake off the strange brooding that oppressed him.

"Beatrice believes that I have forgotten her deep avowal of love for me," thought the young man, with a sigh, "and I want her to still think so; but I have never been the same man since I entered into an engagement with her."

Then he reviewed his betrothal to Hester—the only girl he had ever loved. What a difference there had been in the wooing of the two girls! How strange that two young beings should be so different—that one should be so noble and good, so full of self-sacrifice, that the other should have thoughts beyond her own!

Wyndham Powis felt sorely tried by these truths, which he found himself unable to shake off.

Strangely enough, in that still, silent hour of

the night, he stood face to face with the knowledge of his own secret, which had been revealed to him at last—his marriage with the fair, queenly Beatrice would be a loveless one.

If marriages were made in heaven surely this one was not—only Hester, whom he had so madly worshipped, had ever been intended for his bride; she was the only one he could ever have loved. He knew that at last, when he had engaged himself to Beatrice, that he had met the love that was his doom; that he, who had promised to wed the wildly passionate girl, was in love with another who had passed out of his life—that now he was not free to look upon any other face that he might admire.

As it was, remembering the sick young stranger whom he was to call and see on the morrow, he must look upon her face only once, and then he must steel his heart against her. He wondered within himself at the strange fate that had befallen him—thinking of one, yet his heart belonging to another. Which way did honour lie? He was bound in faith and honour to Beatrice, even if he should meet the one woman who seemed to have been made for him. He was perplexed, agitated. Was it best to keep his promise—to not go near, to never look on the fair, sweet face of the unknown girl whom he had saved, lest a love might come to him that might bless his life? Should he marry the girl whom he did not love, but to whom he was in honour bound?

He had not sought marriage with his betrothed—he had been almost asked by Beatrice to marry her. Without being resolutely heartless, he could not have done otherwise. Now he found that he was about to make himself miserable for life by having done so.

He reproached himself for this impetuous act, for not taking time to think over this step, for he knew then, as he knew now, that he did not love her. Lord Powis stood face to face with this one fact at last—that his marriage would be a loveless one; that wealth, title, grandeur, beauty, nothing that earth could give him would be of any value to him in the future, for he would have to live his life without love—a martyr in silence. The young man rose to his feet in despair.

"Why can I not marry a woman I do not love!" he thought. Looking forward through the possible years of a long life, he saw no gleam of brightness in a union of divided hearts. How different that future would have been for both, he told himself, had it been shared with sweet little Hester, the one being on earth who was the other half of his soul! He was not the first man who had stood confused and embarrassed on the threshold of life—not the first to go through that terrible struggle between duty and inclination, from which few men perhaps ever escape.

He had thought his heart dead to life when he had lost Hester, and had come to the conclusion that it did not matter much what his future was, or with whom it was linked. Oh, if he were but free! How glad he would be if he were but free from that hasty engagement!

The next instant his conscience reproached him. He believed that Beatrice loved him as well as her selfish nature was capable of. He had read love in her eyes on that fatal night when he had said those words that would some day be the means of binding them together.

It seemed almost unmanly for him to review that scene; but there rose to his lips a bitter sob, which he could not resist.

He said to himself that he did not know where the present state of affairs would end. But this he did realise—that he must not play with fire, must not tamper with temptation. He must decide which way honour lay, though the burden of his reveries haunted him.

Wyndham Powis rose at break of day the next morning, looking, as he undoubtedly felt, decidedly bored.

While he decided to surrender all hopes for the future, he determined to have one glimpse of paradise. He would go that very morning to see the sick girl, and not repeat his visit there, so that he might take with him through all time the memory of her words and looks.

Only the night before Beatrice had expressed a

desire to take an early morning ride with him. He sent word that very important business prevented him from granting her request; that he would make it a point to take her out in the afternoon, if she wished. He was thus constantly reminded that Beatrice considered herself his first care, since she was his promised wife.

He did not linger at his home after breakfast, but set out straightway for the hospital, his heart filled with half hope, half fear that some day both the beautiful stranger and himself would be glad that they had met. All the fatigue of the night and the labours of that fateful day previous were forgotten as he caught sight of the building which loomed up before him, thinking, in deep agitation, that he would soon behold the fair, sweet face, with eyes like blue hyacinths, and hear that silvery young voice which had sounded like music, as the matron had remarked.

He found himself at the broad steps, after what seemed an age to him, looking up at the entrance with happy eyes and anxious thoughts of her whom his strong, powerful arms had saved from the jaws of death.

A closed carriage rolled away from a side entrance as he was going up the steps. He heard the sound of the passing wheels, but he did not waste a second to look after it, so engrossed was his mind with a more interesting subject.

A look of unutterable relief came over his face as an attendant came to the door and admitted him into the corridor. He made known his errand—he had come to see the young girl who had been brought there the day before.

The man looked puzzled, and said that no one answering to the description he had given was within those walls.

A hurried consultation between the two men followed, which resulted in Wyndham Powis being invited into the waiting-room and the matron being summoned.

The young man paced up and down the room in a fever of impatience, counting the moments, which seemed like hours to him.

CHAPTER LIV.

It seemed to Wyndham Powis, while he waited there, as though the world were standing still, and as if something terrible was about to happen to him ere he left.

After a lapse of time that seemed an age to him, he heard quick footsteps resound in the corridor without.

He raised an earnest face to the door. Just then the knob turned and the matron crossed the threshold.

He advanced to meet her, his anxious face telling plainly what his errand was, even had she not known it before.

"I have kept my promise to you," he said, briefly. "I have come here early to see the young lady. If it is not too much trouble will you kindly take me to her?"

He saw her shrink as he uttered the words, and look up at him in a hesitating embarrassed way, which seemed to send a chill through him.

"Sir," she said, gently, a change coming over the kindly face, "if you will please be seated for a few moments I will tell you something which I have no doubt will be of importance to you concerning this young lady."

He obeyed her, taking the nearest chair apprehensively.

"She is not worse, I trust!" he ventured to ask, not able to restrain his impatience longer.

"It doesn't look that way, sir," she answered, thoughtfully. "But I may as well tell you of the mistake I made, and how it turned out; but I hope you will not lose heart when I have finished, for I would be so glad to see you happy, sir, and it makes me feel badly the way matters turned out, and I quite powerless to prevent it."

"Please be explicit, do not keep me in suspense," he replied, gravely. "Tell me plainly if anything has happened her, so that I may know the worst. I do not think it right to conceal anything that concerns one so vitally."

"Not I, sir. Well, to tell the truth, I was very busy after you left me yesterday, and I did not get round to the young lady's ward until it was rather late. The woman who called herself her mother was there beside her at the time. As soon as I found an opportunity I broached the subject of your having inquired for the young lady. Her mother looked up at me curiously and began to inquire with a great deal of interest into the subject of which I was speaking. I supposed she would take the same view of it, and so I explained:

"The gentleman who rescued the young lady from her perilous position came here to inquire about your daughter. He would be quite glad to see her, and he seemed to take a deep interest in her."

"I would have liked ever so much to have seen him," the girl answered, quickly; "for I want to thank the gentleman for saving my life. Oh, why did not you let me see him when he called to-day?"

"The mother interposed quickly before I could answer, and made some harsh, disagreeable remark about not allowing you to come where her daughter was, and ended by saying that she would rather take her away, weak as she was, than ever have you set eyes on the girl."

"All words and expostulations were useless. The young girl wept and implored her mother to let you come to her at least once, that she might express her gratitude to you; but no, the woman was obdurate, and refused to listen to her pleadings, declaring over and over again that she would have her removed from the institution without delay."

"What was my surprise upon going my rounds early this very morning to find that the mother had hired a close carriage and had her daughter removed. You can hardly have missed them, sir," she added, "for they drove out of the side or carriage entrance just about the same time that you made your appearance here."

"Have you no idea where—where they went to?" asked the young man, staggering to his feet, as if an electric shock had passed through him; adding, shortly, "The young lady left no word or message?"

"None that I know of," answered the matron, thoughtfully. "We haven't the slightest trace of their destination, or no clue of them—not the least. I am sorry to say. Their going away was completely veiled in mystery. I never in all my life saw two so unlike as this so-called mother and daughter were. I am sorry it ended so," she repeated.

Ah, Heaven! what a disappointment the news was to him, yet what would this beautiful unknown girl have thought had she known he had plighted his troth, bartered his heart to some one else, even while he was seeking her out?

Wyndham Powis was not the man to do things by halves.

"There is no use in my lingering here longer," he said, with a sigh. "Your words, that she appreciated my little act of kindness must suffice, since she has gone."

The matron's heart was touched when she looked at him, he was so keenly disappointed—so crushed.

She made him no answer, for the simple reason that she had no further hope to extend him. He thanked her for her kindness, and took his departure, his life more cheerless than ever.

Wyndham Powis made a hasty departure down the street in an abstracted state of mind, looking neither to the right nor to the left, noticing none of the pedestrians who hurried along.

Just as he was about to turn the nearest corner in the direction that led to his home some one touched him familiarly on the elbow. He looked up, and there, standing before him with outstretched hand, was Mr. Dudley.

"Why, how are you, Powis, my boy? You are the last person on earth whom I ever expected to see in this locality 'pon my word. What direction are you bound for, if I may ask?"

"Nowhere in particular, Mr. Dudley," he answered, absently. "I was just trying to put in the time for an hour or so, in strolling—to lose myself, as it were, in the surroundings for

the want of something better to occupy my mind."

"Ah! if that is the case, perhaps I may be permitted to intrude a little upon your society. By the way, Powis, I believe you have promised us for quite a while to spend a month or so at our villa, and talk over the pleasant times we have enjoyed together."

"It is a pleasure that I anticipate in the near future, I assure you," responded Wyndham, warmly, "but just now I am hardly free enough to take a trip among my friends and make it anything else but a bore to them, I must plainly admit."

"You need have no fear of that. You are always entertaining, even in your quietest mood. I will try and do the entertaining with the aid of others. I have several new enterprises that you will like to hear of, I am sure, including a beautiful young prima donna I am to bring out soon."

"No one is more glad to hear of your success than I am, I must admit. Perhaps in a week or two hence I will run down to your place, and try to make it pleasant for you in return."

"We shall not wait any such length of time: if you have no other engagement what's the reason you do not make up your mind to come back with me this very afternoon? Jennie has been expecting you every day, and it will be an agreeable surprise to my daughter, as well as a pleasure to one and all, to have you as our guest."

His hearty, whole-souled manner cheered up the young man wonderfully—made him forget his late disappointment, and all unkindly that he was on his way to meet his fate Wyndham Powis answered, cordially:

"I shall be pleased to accompany you home, Mr. Dudley, unceremonious as it is."

"Come then, I will manage that. You will see that I can arrange small parties for your diversion in a few hours' time most any day when you are out with us. You have a liking for grand music. You can hear the most sublime melody from our little songstress, who will honour us with her presence for my daughter's sake. Then there are other young girls who frequently visit our place, and you will have amusements, both indoor and out, to your heart's content."

"My tastes are very simple, and I am easily entertained, thanks to your kindness. I am grateful to you for your kind invitation, and I know I shall enjoy the time very much at your villa. I will be pleased to go with you."

In less time than it takes to tell it the two were on their way to the Dudley villa. During that pleasant ride more than once Wyndham Powis was tempted to tell his friend confidentially all about the love of his heart, which was lost for ever—the fair, gentle Hester of the past, and how he had offered Beatrice his hand in marriage because of the love which she so freely professed for him that fatal night. But some unexpected turn in the conversation would prevent him from broaching the subject that was ever uppermost in his mind.

Mr. Dudley's enthusiasm was at the highest pitch when their conversation dwelt upon beautiful women and their charms. He was particularly enthusiastic in defining the unusual gifts of the beautiful young singer, whom he told him over and over again would without doubt take the music-loving world by storm.

It would be a special favour for him to permit any one, outside of his own family, to be presented to her, he told the young man, but he would be certain to make an exception in his favour, as the girl was young, and unused to strangers and society.

Her mother was unusually strict with her, and only yesterday, as on several other instances, when he had expressed a wish to call upon her, he had not received a reply, so that he knew his visit would be a trespass.

"It is rarely one ever finds a young lady so highly gifted who is shut out so completely from the world," mused the manager, aloud. "Her mother does not seem to have a natural affection for her, I oftentimes think. She acts as if she wanted to keep her away from everybody, especially from young people, while she has a great

dislike to having her meet strangers in private life; and I'm not sorry for that safeguard myself, I tell you, my boy. I'll not be afraid of losing my gold mine, for I know she'll prove to be that. By Jove! there goes her carriage now. Either her mother has taken her out for a drive, or else some one has called upon her."

(To be continued.)

HIS FIRST AND ONLY LOVE.

—101—

(Continued from page 153.)

"I have no ties, dear," she said once to Edgar when he remonstrated with her, and there might have been something a little sad in the tone. "I mean no ties such as you have. I have no duty to anyone; my life belongs to those for whom I have given it, and if I had ties, still my duty would be like a priest's—to think of my people."

"This is a very high view to take, Laurie," Edgar said, half-doubtfully, and his sister had only answered, a little dreamily,—

"Yes," taking up her hat, and said "she must go out now."

There was naturally a fearful distress prevailing in this part of London, and for those who were left helpless, as well as for those who were struck down and in want of everything, subscriptions were set on foot, and meetings were held to take measures for relief, also to consider means for the prevention of such outbreaks in the future. Such considerations are usually aroused a little too late, and at one of these meetings Dr. Laurie Greenfell was announced to speak.

Keith Montrose saw the announcement in the Times, and, instead of throwing it down as once he might have done, he sat quite still for a moment, then took note of place and hour.

He had never heard Laurie speak in public, and, though he winced a little at the idea, he meant to have it out. He knew not very distinctly why he wanted to go and hear her—partly it was the longing to see her anywhere, partly it was—this perhaps unconsciously—that he wanted to accustom himself to the sight of Laurie Greenfell on a platform.

He was just noting down the hour, when in came Jack Larpent, smoking his eternal cigar, and looked over his shoulder.

"Hollos, old fellow," said he, "you going there?"

"Yes," Keith answered, jotting down "Paradise Hall," with a little frown on his handsome brow.

"Paradise Hall" had an unsavoury sound to this lord of the creation's fastidious ears.

"Well, but I say, you know," said Jack, sitting on a table, "it's a shame now to cut her up. She's a real brick."

"I have not said that I was going to cut her up," said Keith, drily. Thereupon Jack opened his eyes.

"You don't mean to say—'Pon my honour wonders will never cease! That you are going to write her up."

"Neither have I said that, mon cher."

"Oh, hang the fellow!" said Jack, half-laughing, half-waxed. "You're in one of your inscrutable humours. What are you going for, then?"

"To hear her."

"To hear her! I thought you had sworn never to listen to a lady-doctor lecture."

"I don't think I registered a vow to Heaven to that effect," answered Keith, smilingly, rolling one of his favourite cigarettes.

"Do you know, young man," said Jack, after contemplating his friend a moment, "that the West End Review has been wonderfully reticent over this same question lately?"

"We have said all there is to say," said Keith. "The subject is now dry. One can't harp for ever on one string."

"And then," said Jack, seriously, "it would be atrociously ungrateful in you, old man, to

slang into the ladies after one had set you up so splendidly and nursed you up like a trump."

"Just so," said Keith, quietly, "and therefore I am silent."

"Ah, yes; a wonderful thing gratitude!" said Jack, laughing. "Would you be so grateful to a doctor of forty, with fifty wrinkles and a crooked mouth and a bonnet of the year '20! Ahem! Keith, my boy—my dearest boy—have you struck your colours at last?"

For a second Montrose flushed to his brow, then grew white.

"For Heaven's sake don't jest, Jack!" he said, under his breath, and turned aside, and there was a minute's painful silence; then Jack, who reproached himself bitterly for having planted a sting in a friend's wound, came and laid his hand on Keith's shoulder.

"Forgive me, dear boy," he said. "I'm a thoughtless ass. I had no thought to wound you with my stupid jests."

Keith looked up with a half smile, and clasped the other's hand.

"Nay," he said, gently, "it is not you who have wounded me; the wound is there. Say no more, Jack, you are my friend, but even to my friend I cannot speak of this any more. Shall you go to-night?" he added, with a sudden change of manner that would effectually put an end to the former subject if Jack had wished to continue it.

"I'm not sure; yes, I think so; must depend on my engagements. A party of fellows want me in Half Moon-street. Jolly set. Then I've got Heaven knows how many things to do for the *Illustrated*, what d'you call 'em. Hang it all!" grumbled Jack.

"Then take my advice, my son, and stick to the work," said Keith; "for if you go to-night to the 'jolly set' you'll never get through by Friday."

"Oh, 'tis all very well for you, you incorrigible worker," said Jack, who, like many of his set, bundled off his work to the very last minute, and so often bundled it over the edge of the last minute that it became lost. "You sit here in this palatial apartment and say to one man go, and he goeth, and to another, do this, and he doeth it."

"Work isn't the less work for that, you harum scarum fellow," laughed Keith. "Now take my advice, and then you'll know the reward of virtue, a clear conscience."

"About the only reward poor Virtue ever gets," said Jack, as he swung himself out of the door. "Well, I'll think of it. Ta-ta."

CHAPTER IX.

PARADISE HALL was crowded to the doors and beyond them when Keith Montrose entered and took a place quite at the back, where he could see but could not be seen from the platform.

He glanced over the audience, taking in with a practised eye the social status of the majority in the front row, mostly philanthropists, men and women doctors, and those interested in sanitary matters; further back those who had some need of being taught how to keep such health as had dwellings, overcrowded rooms, and defective draining allowed them.

This is no sick and sad meeting, where touching appeals should be made, and harrowing descriptions given of weeping widows and fatherless children—where ladies in rich dresses should with tears pull out portmonnaies and give their sovereigns for the poor, helpless creatures.

No such easy charity was asked of these people in the front row; there was something more difficult besought, for it is far harder to give one's work and time and ability to a good work than to put a ten-pound note down.

On the platform were many noted physicians—the cleverest in the land; there were also two or three well-known lady doctors, but Laurie had not yet arrived.

If Keith had meant to see his idol in the midst of everyday life he had chosen his meeting well, and it was a kind of satisfaction to him to

bruise his own feelings, to face boldly the unpalatable truth, that in such places and about such matters his Laurie was quite at home.

But it was pain; he was bruised, the people were frowzy; there was a close smell, and the audience for the most part looked as if they sorely needed "sanitary" lectures, and Keith Montrose thought sanitary affairs of all others the most uninteresting. He took only that interest in such questions as they affect the broader question of the nation's life; but as to the details—as to the building of a room four square feet larger, or whitewashing, or laying a drain-pipe, &c., those were for sanitary commissions, and so on.

From his thoughts Keith was aroused by such a mingled clapping and cheering as made the building tremble. No need for him to look, there was Laurie Greenfell, his own darling, so quiet, so graceful, shaking hands with a famous physician who erst had been rather cold to her and her sisterhood, but who now led her to her seat with deferential courtesy, and had warm words of praise to say of her in a well-known medical paper, praising not less her skill and her learning than the sweet womanliness that lent it value.

Could there be something radically unfit in a training and system that could leave a Laurie Greenfell what she was?

"Bless her sweet face!" said a woman, near Keith, wiping her eyes; "she sat up with my poor husband two nights, and she brought him through, that she did."

"And she's jest an angel," said another, "a coming round the court so soft and gentle like. My man, you know," laughing, as she swung a not very clean baby up and down, thereby distributing a not savoury air in the neighbourhood of the *West-End* editor, who did not in this minute so keenly observe the odour, "'e didn't 'arf like one of them 'ere lady doctors a comin'; but lor', she made little Jim well, and did her best for the baby that's gone. 'Aint she just clever!' says 'e, now."

"Can't she speak up too?" put in another. "Lor', you should a 'eard 'er ordering that there inspector round, which ought to be white-washed, and 'adn't. Whist, she be a speaking!"

She was. The silver, clear voice was scarcely lifted, but it came as distinctly as a perfectly-toned bell to Keith's ear, and it was nothing remarkable she spoke of—the most matter-of-fact, the most uninteresting of subjects—yet she gave her own charm of word and manner to every sentence.

There are some people to whom one listens willingly, even if they speak only of the driest subjects; such is the magic of style they possess.

One of these was Dr. Laurence Greenfell; and, putting aside the fact that this was the woman he loved, Keith Montrose thought he could well be interested in the sanitary conditions of poor dwellings when the subject was so handled; and, somehow, she seemed not out of her element.

She was a woman, a lady delicately bred and highly cultivated—one of the world's polished ones; and she addressed a crowded meeting of labourers and artisans, and rougher, lower people than these. She spoke of drainage and overcrowding, of cleanliness and its antithesis; and all seemed suitable for her to speak of.

Keith felt no shock, at any rate, while under her potent charm. It did not seem dreadful for a woman to stand forth in public and speak like this. He told himself afterwards this was only feeling, not reason; and yet, surely all these long weeks some of his opinions had been a little lowered at their roots!

The very wish, the very longing he had to bring himself to see the position as she did, made him over-sensitive to mistake what he wished for what he thought.

Since he had been with Laurie at Moulton-on-Sea he had seen more of the women who gave themselves up to the profession, he had mixed more with them, and some of what he knew to be prejudices had been disturbed and laid aside.

Keith Montrose was far too clear-sighted and too noble-minded to cling to an opinion merely because he had previously held it under different conditions of thought.

Night after night came back the same arguments for and against. He thought of Laurie, this beautiful, delicate woman, stepping so boldly, yet so modestly, to the fore part of the great, never-ending battle with disease and want and sin, going nobly through years of study that must have revolted her woman's soul, in order to gain the knowledge wherewith she should arm herself.

And did she not bring to it a purer, holier soul than the men who studied the same subjects? The question of conflicting duties did not come seriously before him; he knew if he had married a singer or an actress perhaps a quarter of a year she would be away fulfilling engagements, and he knew many such with husband and children who managed to fulfil their duties both to family and profession, and gave more attention to the former than nine fashionable mothers out of ten, who have, or ought to have, all their time at their own disposal.

"Dr. Laurie Greenfell is looking fagged," some one said in society one evening later than this. "She ought to leave town—she has done wonders in all this dreadful cholera time—no man could have worked harder."

"Such women," answered the person addressed, "do much to eradicate the prejudice or opinions so firmly rooted in most men's minds against a woman being a doctor."

"Yes! If all were like her."

If all were like her. But Keith had only to do with the one, not with the "all."

It was quite true that Laurie was looking tired, not only looking, but feeling. For she had her own private burden to bear now, her own skeleton to hide, and that she bore her burden bravely, uncomplainingly, made it none the less hard. It used to come over her sometimes in these days, when she returned home after being about all day in scenes of misery and wretchedness, how sweet it must be to have some one to meet who loved and thought of you, who would clasp you gently in his arms, and give you that dear welcome home that her heart ached to receive.

But it was an empty house Laurie came to—a solitary table she sat down to. If she sought to soothe herself with music no one was pleased but herself. Things seemed to have lost their old savour—all but her work; and at times in those days Laurie was afraid to play—music brought the tears to her eyes, and she must not be weak.

When the worst of the cholera was passed Laurie left town. She was indeed tired and overworked, and yielded to her brother's entreaties that she should go down with them to Folkestone, where they were to stay for Edgar's holiday.

"Unless you would like to go abroad!" said Edgar, questioningly.

But Laurie leaned her head on his shoulder wearily.

"No, I would like to be with you, Eddie," she said, softly, a little tremulously; and he looked at her anxiously, and kissed the silky curls on her forehead.

"You are overfagged, my Laurie!"

"Yes, a little, Eddie;" and then she lifted her head after a moment, and smiled brightly. "We will all go together, and forget all the work. Now I will go to Nell, and see about various things."

For she could scarcely trust her self-control just now, and feared to be too long with him; and so they all went together down to the seaside—down to delicious, breezy Folkestone; and Keith Montrose was off to Germany for a time. But he found no peace up the Rhine any more than he had in his office in Wellington-street, and the further he went from Laurie the more he longed for her presence. The colours were coming down fast.

CHAPTER X.

"COME and see the boat in, Auntie Laurie, please," cried a small edition of Edgar to that much-tyrannised over, much-loved, and petted, and ordered about, Dr. Laurie.

Ellen used to say that Laurie atoned for much sternness to her patients by unlimited spoiling of Eddie. And so Laurie went down to the harbour with the boy, and his father and mother, to see

the boat come in—that never-falling amusement at Folkestone and Dover.

"Here she comes!" cried Eddie, dancing delightedly up and down, keeping fast hold of Laurie's hand the while; "now she's coming alongside! Why, do you know that gentleman, auntie!"

For a gentleman standing on the deck had lifted his hat and bowed. Laurie drew a deep, silent breath, and for a moment her hand closed fast round that of the child. But she turned quietly to her brother, saying, with a smile,—

"There is Mr. Montrose, Eddie!"

And at that minute Keith sprang ashore, and was bowing low, with words of greeting to Mrs. Greenfell. But Laurie knew not why, when he turned to her, his silent hand-clasp sent an almost wild thrill of something that was more than joy, hope, expectancy.

Keith only paused to give his servant some orders; then they all turned and together went with the stream back along the shore, question and answer passing between them.

"You have not taken a long holiday, Mr. Montrose!" said Ellen.

"Work calls me back, Mrs. Greenfell," he answered, smiling, "business; and I had some holidays in the summer, you know."

"Yes," put in Eddie, who had attached himself to one of Keith's hands, with the pretty trustfulness of a pretty, petted child; "but that wasn't a holiday, Mr. Montrose."

"No. Why not, Eddie?" said Keith, bending down a little, a half smile on his handsome mouth.

"Why, you were ill!" answered Eddie. "You broke your arm, and Auntie Laurie made you well, didn't she? And do you know papa said it was a 'great lark' because you didn't like ladies to be doctors!"

"Eddie, you must not chatter so," Laurie said, with a touch of severity, and she bent her head to hide the flush that rose to her cheek; but Keith glancing at her said to the child, gently,—

"Papa was right then, my child; but Auntie taught me many things then. You see I had made a mistake," then he immediately turned round to Edgar, and said, smiling as he paused, "here, I stop at the Pavilion; you, I suppose, are on the cliff!"

"Yes, but you will come and dine with us, won't you?" said Edgar, cordially, and his wife added her entreaties, and so Keith promised.

But Laurie said nothing; she wished it too much, and yet dreaded it.

The Greenfells had rooms in a house facing the sea, so it took but little time for Keith to walk up from the Pavilion. He was early, and was informed that the ladies were not yet down, and was ushered into the drawing-room, from which opened a smaller room only divided by silk curtains from the principal apartment. Therein stood the piano, and someone was softly touching the keys, playing dreamy minor chords and wandering restlessly from one to the other, as if the heart of the player, too, were restless.

A moment Keith stood and listened; he was very pale now in this supreme moment of his life, and yet his heart was throbbing heavily. Only one second he paused, then stepped forward and lifted the curtains and stood within. He had made scarcely any sound, yet she had known he was there, and with a half-startled look rose from the piano, the crimson rushing to her brow, trying to say some ordinary words of welcome. But he came to her side, and her hands were clasped in his—held close, and he bowed his forehead down on them with half-whispered words.

"Laurie—Laurie—forgive—forgive! Oh! how could I make you suffer so, my darling—my darling!"

And forgiveness is so light when one loves. Laurie only bowed her bright head on his breast as he clasped her to him, and whispered, half-bewildered with this new happiness,—

"Keith, is it all over? You will not leave me again!"

"My own Laurie! Ah, these months have been so long—so weary," Keith said, softly, pas-

EPPS'S COCOINE

COCOA-NIB EXTRACT.

(Tea-like).

The choicest roasted nibs (broken-up beans) of the natural Cocoa on being subjected to powerful hydraulic pressure, give forth their excess of oil, leaving for use a finely flavoured powder—"Cocaine," a product which, when prepared with boiling water, has the consistency of tea, of which it is now, with many, beneficially taking the place. Its active principle being a gentle nerve stimulant, supplies the needed energy without unduly exciting the system. Sold only in Tins, labelled:—

JAMES EPPS & CO., Limited,
Homeopathic Chemists, London.

TO LADIES.

HEALTHY, WEALTHY & WISE.

An interesting little COPYRIGHT TREATISE, which should be carefully read by every English Wife. Sent FREE on receipt of a stamped addressed envelope.—Apply M.D., 317, Graham Road, London, N.E. Please name this Paper.

TOOTH-ACHE

CURED INSTANTLY BY—

BUNTER'S NERVINE
Prevents Decay, Saves Extractions, Sleepless Nights
Neuralgic Headaches and all Nerve Pains removed by BUNTER'S NERVINE. All Chemists, 1s. 11d.

£20 TOBACCONISTS COMMENCING.
See Illustr. Guide and Catalogue (350 pages), 4s. "How to open a Cigar Store, from £20 to £500." TOBACCONISTS' OUTFITTING CO., 126, Roper Road, London. (Over 50 years' reputation.) Manager, H. MYERS.

OTTEY'S UNLABELLED STRONG PILLS.

Are twice as efficacious as any others, and always quickly and certainly relieve. Greatly superior to Steel and Pennyroyal. Invaluable to women.

Post free for 14 and 28 stamps from THOMAS OTTEY, Chemist, Burton-on-Trent. Please mention LONDON READER.

Wanted immediately (everywhere), Trustworthy Persons of EITHER SEX. Work easy, constant, and well paid.—For reply, enclose stamped addressed envelope. EVANS, WATTS & Co. (p. 1000), Merchants, Birmingham.

INDIARUBBER STAMPS

For Handing Note-paper, Working Letters, Orders, Facsimiles, and all Business Purposes. Monograms.—Two-Letter, 1s., Three-Letter, 1s. 5d. Your name in full, 1s. 4d. Postage 8d. extra. This price includes Stamp, mounted on Brass complete, with Box, Pads, and Ink. Price Lists of all kinds free.

J. BERKLEY, LIVERY ST., BIRMINGHAM

GREY HAIR NECROCEINE.

(REGISTERED.)
Stains Grey Hair, Whiskers, Eyebrows any shade desired. Does not stain the Skin. Is applied in a few minutes. It is Harmless, Washable, Lasting, and Restores the Colour to the Root, making Defection impossible, and undoubtedly the Cleanest and Best Hair Stain in the World. No. 1, Light Brown; No. 2, Golden; No. 3, Dark Brown; No. 4, Black. Sent secretly packed, by post, 1s. 3d., 2s. 3d., 3s. 3d., 4s., and 10s.

MEDICAL CERTIFICATE SENT WITH EACH BOTTLE. Write for booklet "Feminine Life."

M. LEIGH & CRAWFORD, 31, BROOKE ST., HOLBORN, LONDON, E.C.

Show this to some Woman.

I will send a valuable, instructive, and highly interesting book which every woman would be glad to have. Contains important and confidential advice, and tells how to keep healthy and avoid the anxieties so distressing to all. Sent free, securely sealed, for one stamp, to cover postage.—Address, Professor A. H. LA SALLE, Carburton House Carburton Street, London, W.

ing his hands over the sunny curls. "I have come so tardily to see my mistake; mine is an unconditional surrender, my heart."

She laid her hand half-deprecatingly on his and flushed a little; but he smiled and kissed her tenderly.

"I know your thoughts, Laurie. No, it is hard for me to surrender to you—to say to you that I could willingly efface all that I have said and written so hardly, so unjustly of—ah! Laurie." He bent his head and was silent. That was pain to remember how he had pained her.

"Dear Keith," said Laurie, gently, "forget it all please, don't say any more; and you are quite—quite sure you will never be sorry?"

"Never, my Laurie. I have not come lightly to think differently from what I used to, and I shall never interfere with your work or wish you otherwise than you are, unless you find it incompatible with other duties—and that I can safely leave to your own conscience. I love you the more, dear, that you could not give up your life's work for your heart's love."

"You are so good to me, Keith."

"Hush, Laurie, that wounds me," Montrose said, quickly; then almost immediately added, half smiling again, "Good, I don't know; you see the citadel would only surrender on its own terms; you wouldn't strike your colours, so I must."

"But where is my Laurie!" cried Edgar's voice in the drawing-room, and Montrose took Laurie's hand in his and came through from the inner room.

"Here is Laurie," he said, laughing; "will you give her to me, to be my Laurie now!"

"Will I give her to you?" said Edgar, "it strikes me this young lady out in the world don't want to ask my leave. Ah! Montrose," he added, earnestly, with a change of tone as he clasped the other's hand cordially, "nothing could give me greater, more hearty pleasure than this. So Laurie is to be a good wife after all. Ah, Laurie! Laurie!" He drew his sister to him and kissed her.

"But a good physician too," Keith said, smiling, and went away, leaving the brother and sister together. And Nell was no less glad than her husband, but, of course, said triumphantly to him that night,—

"Didn't I tell you there was something between those two?"

That was certainly a happy autumn vacation, and no one found Dr. Laurie Greenfell looking over-tired and over-worked now.

The marriage, however, was not till the early spring, because neither could spare the time till about the Easter recess. Keith Montrose only laughs when even now sometimes a friend will chaff him on his past opinion and when he comes home draws a certain beautiful face down on to his breast, and says, as he tells her,—

"But I struck my colours, after all, to the fairest foe—Justice—and to my first, last love—my wife."

[THE END.]

It is argued that flies can see the Röntgen rays as well as sun rays. If sunlight is admitted to one corner only of a box in which flies are confined, they all go to that corner. If Röntgen rays are used, the corner remains dark to human eyes, but the flies collect there just as promptly as when sunlight is admitted.

The making of artificial ears seems to have reached scientific perfection within the last decade. Made of a specially prepared rubber, flesh-coloured in the rough, they are painted by hand in exact imitation of the remaining ear of the unfortunate customer, and as carefully "touched" and marked over as an artist's picture. The maker gets £20 apiece for them.

CHRONIC INDIGESTION and its attendant Misery and Suffering Cured with Tonic "Docron" (purely vegetable), 2/6, from Chemists, 2/-, post free from Dr. Hous, "Glendower," Bourne-mouth. Sample bottle and pamphlet, with Analytical Reports, &c., 6 Stamps.

FACETIÆ.

WAGG: "What are you doing now?" Verisopht: "Oh, I'm living by brainwork." Wagg: "Whose?"

"HAVE you ever read 'The Bright Side of Suffering'?" "No. Who wrote it?" "I don't know. Some doctor, I imagine."

MR. BOODLES: "You began life as a barefooted boy, I understand?" New Clerk: "Yes, sir; I was born without shoes."

ON CANVAS.—Artist: "How do like the portrait?" "Well, I don't exactly like the nose." Artist: "Neither do I—but it's yours."

"DOES your latest novel enjoy a large sale?" he inquired. "I don't know whether the novel enjoys it or not," replied the author; "but I do."

"THE greatest pleasure of my life I get from my music," said she. "What a great advantage you have over your neighbours," replied the unfeeling brute.

LADY CUSTOMER: "That pair of slippers I bought of you a short time ago has worn out." Assistant: "Bad leather, ma'am!" "No; bad boy."

ADORER (after a rebuke by the old lady): "I didn't kiss you. I only pretended I was going to. Why did you call to your mother?" Sweet Girl (repentantly): "I—I didn't know she was in the house."

KENTUCKY ETIQUETTE.—First Kentuckian: "I understand the lynching of that man who murdered his wife was a very quiet affair." Second Kentuckian: "Oh, yes. Recent death in the family!"

"THERE is no way to mend my broken fortunes!" sighed the disconsolate young duke. "But they might be spliced, you know," chuckled the sly old millionaire, whose plain daughter had passed the heyday of life.

LONG-HAIRED INDIVIDUAL (to Sub-Editor): "Is the editor in?" Sub-Editor: "No; he's gone off on his vacation." L. H. I.: "Do you know whether he read my poem before he went?" Sub-Editor: "I think he did. He asked for an extra week's rest."

"WHO is that sprightly girl over there?" "That's Miss Jones, who took part in the amateur theatricals last night." "And who are those nineteen tired-looking women near her?" "Those are her mother, sisters, aunts, and cousins, who helped her to get ready!"

"Now that," said the American visitor, as he was being shown about the fine old English mansion, and passed into the gallery where the family portraits were, "is, I presume, a very valuable painting. An old master, is it not?" "No, sir, begging your pardoning, sir," replied the butler, "it's the old missis."

"I ALWAYS dislike men who have no ear for music," said one girl, "and now I dislike them more than ever. Charlie Nairgo called to see me yesterday evening. At 11 o'clock I went to the piano." "And played 'Home, Sweet Home'?" said the other girl. "Yes. First I played it as a ballad. He didn't move. Then I played it as a waltz, and next as a two-step, and then as a jig." "And what did he do?" "He said: 'Gracious, Miss Jones, what a jolly lot of tunes you know! And all of them so different!'"

AMERICAN GIRL: "Ma, the Scotch lord has invited me to see the new tragedy with him to-night, and I see by the papers that the star is ill and the drama will not be produced. It's awfully provoking." Ma: "That does not matter, dear; you have seen that tragedy once, and no doubt some other play will be presented. Go with him, of course." American Girl (after the performance): "You sat through that comedy without a smile, and it was awfully funny, too; I nearly died laughing." Scotch Lord: "Why didn't you tell me it was a comedy? I bought stalls for a tragedy."

MR. R. SMITH,

LAY PREACHER, of BRACEBRIDGE, LINCOLN,

writes:—"Awhile ago I was taken seriously ill and suffered most severely from pain in the stomach arising from

INDIGESTION,

I summoned my Doctor, but he failed to give any relief. A friend strongly advised me to try

PAGE WOODCOCK'S WIND PILLS.

"I did so, and a most remarkable change for the better took place. I thought I was marked for death, but I have been brought from death to life. I have been the means of selling hundreds of your Pills."

ALL SUFFERERS from INDIGESTION, LIVER COMPLAINTS, WIND on the STOMACH, BILIOUSNESS, SICK HEADACHE, PALPITATION of the HEART, &c., should avail themselves of this most excellent medicine.

170,000 BOXES SOLD ANNUALLY.

The **WIND PILLS** being PURELY VEGETABLE, TASTELESS, MILD and TONIC in their action, may be taken with perfect safety by the most delicate of either sex.

All Vendors 1/1½ and 2/9.

SOCIETY.

THE Crown Prince and Crown Princess will represent the King and Queen of Denmark at the Jubilee fêtes.

THE Prince of Wales will hold a special Levee next month, representing the Queen, when the Colonial Premiers and other prominent Colonial visitors are to be presented by the Secretary of State for the Colonies. Most of the foreign representatives will be present. Nearly all the Colonials will receive some mark of Royal favour.

THE Queen has decided that in June every member of her household who has belonged to it for fifty years is to receive a gold medal. Those who have served for twenty-five years are to have a silver medal. Those who have served less than twenty-five years, but more than ten years, will receive a bar or badge, and the Jubilee medal which was given to most members of the Household in 1887.

THE Queen has given permission for her portrait to be taken on the day of the review. Her Majesty will appear on this occasion seated in a carriage drawn by four grey horses, with Princess Henry of Battenberg sitting beside her, and the Highland attendant and Highland servant at the back. The Duke of Connaught will be mounted on the left of the carriage, and the Prince of Wales and the Duke of York on the right.

It is rumoured that the Dowager Empress of Russia is very anxious to arrange a marriage between her brother-in-law, the Grand Duke Paul of Russia, a widower of thirty-six, and Princess Victoria of Wales. Princess Victoria has an objection to live in Russia, and, as wife of one of the Royal Princes, would be obliged to do so for the greater part of the year. The Grand Duke Paul has two beautiful children, a girl and a boy. But Princess Victoria is said to have expressed her determination not to marry.

THE Royal yacht *Alberta* is docked at Portsmouth, and is undergoing a thorough overhaul and refit during the next month. The *Alberta* is to be ready for service by the middle of June, as she will be required on the occasion of the Jubilee naval review at Spithead, when several Royal personages are to be on board of her. It is understood that the Prince of Wales, the Duke of Coburg, the Duke of York, and several of the guests from abroad will use the *Osborne* on the day of the review.

IN the little town of Nasso, in Sweden, the women happen to be women, however paradoxical that sounds. The place is only a little village, and four enormous tubs constitute the "water works." One hundred and fifty women make make up the Fire Department, and one of their duties consists in always keeping the tubs filled with water. The women are fine workers, and know how to handle a fire with as little confusion as possible.

THE Queen is expected to arrive at St. Paul's a few minutes before one o'clock on June 22nd, and her carriage and escort will halt before the steps in front of the west door, which is to remain open, and before which the clergy are to be grouped. No altar will be erected. On the strong recommendation of the Commissioner of Police, the paving-stones, granite pillars, and chains which now surround Queen Anne's statue will in all probability be temporarily removed, as it is thought they would prove very dangerous to horses. Dr. Martin's new *Te Deum* will be sung by a picked choir of five hundred voices. The chorists will be recruited principally from the choir of St. Paul's, Westminster Abbey, the Chapel Royal, and St. George's, Windsor. The accompaniment will be played by a military band two hundred strong. One collect will be read by the Bishop of London, and another by the Dean of St. Paul's. After either the Old Hundredth Psalm, or the hymn, "We thank Thee, O Lord!" the Archbishop of Canterbury will pronounce the Benediction. The proceedings will occupy just twenty minutes.

STATISTICS.

THERE are 20,000 different kinds of butter-fles.

IF horse-racing were abolished it is estimated that over 20,000 people would be thrown out of employment in England.

A MAN who shaves regularly until he is 80 years old cuts off about 35ft. of hair, although, if he doesn't shave, it doesn't necessarily follow that his whiskers will be 35ft. long when he is 80.

IN Great Britain 2,186 magazines are published, of which 537 are of a religious character. There are 2,396 newspapers printed, 218 of them being dailies. Fifty years ago there were only 14 dailies published.

GENS.

THEY who have most of heart know most of sorrow.

THE man of genius creates circumstances, the man of talent uses them, the fool looks at them without seeing them.

IF a man smiles when he's angry, it is a good indication that the knife he is carrying up his sleeve is an unusually long and sharp one.

Set yourself earnestly to see what you were made to do, and then set yourself earnestly to do it; and the loftier your purpose is the more sure you will be to make the world richer with every enrichment of yourself.

It is a truth which needs continual emphasis that the highest work for any one is that which he can do best. A weak lawyer, an inefficient physician, an incapable financier are vastly inferior as men and as workers to the skilled mechanic or the well-trained labourer who knows his work and does it with thoroughness and self-respect.

HOUSEHOLD TREASURES.

EGGS FONDUE.—Beat six eggs until light; add cayenne pepper and salt, and three tablespoonfuls of grated cheese; put one ounce of butter in a frying-pan, and when hot turn in the eggs and stir until cooked. This, like all forms of scrambled eggs, must be removed from the fire while soft, as the cooking continues a few seconds after dished, and if hardened in the slightest degree, they are spoiled.

RABBIT STEW—GERMAN STYLE.—Take the entire skin from two rabbits, draw, wash and wipe them dry; carefully remove the gall from the liver. Cut each rabbit into eight pieces; season them with one tablespoonful of salt; place in a covered dish, add two sliced onions, six cloves, two bay leaves, half tablespoonful of whole peppers and ten whole allspices. Cover with vinegar and set it for three days in a cool place. Then place the rabbits, with the vinegar, spice and onions in a saucepan over the fire, add half pint water; cook slowly until done. Then carefully remove the rabbit pieces, lay them on a warm dish. Melt two ounces butter in a saucepan, add one heaping tablespoonful flour, cook and stir three minutes. Strain the rabbit broth, add to it the butter and flour, cook five minutes, and pour it over the rabbit pieces. At the same time peel and wash one quart small potatoes, place them in a saucepan, cover with one quart cold water, add one tablespoonful salt, boil until half done, then drain off the water. Place a frying-pan with two ounces of butter over the fire. When hot, put in as many of the potatoes as will conveniently go into the pan without crowding, fry to a golden colour. Remove to a hot dish. Fry the remainder the same way. Serve them with the rabbits. Potato dumplings may be served in place of potatoes.

MISCELLANEOUS.

A FRENCH chemist has invented a blue soap which renders unnecessary the use of bluing in laundry work.

AS far as calculation can decide, the temperature of comets is believed to be 2,000 times fiercer than that of red-hot iron.

THE newest thing in letter-boxes is a box with an electrical attachment, which will ring a bell in the kitchen when a letter is dropped in.

IN some of the Hindu temples of Southern India the collection is made by an elephant that goes around with a basket. Everybody contributes.

IT has been estimated that over 2,000,000 acres are devoted to the maintenance of deer in Scotland, and that about 5,000 stags are annually killed.

A BEE, with all its industry, energy, and the innumerable journeys it has to perform, will not collect much more than a teaspoonful of honey in a season.

A CHEMIST advises that canned fruit be opened an hour or two before it is used. It becomes richer after the oxygen of the air has been restored to it.

AT the seaside or in the country, where the air is clear, 1,500 microbes must be inhaled into the nose every hour, while in London the number often reaches 14,000.

IN Spain each year is named after an animal, and people born in certain years are forbidden to intermarry. Thus, an elephant baby cannot marry a tiger, nor a lion a lamb; and there are heavy penalties for lying about one's age.

THE reason that Mount St. Michael, off the coast of Normandy, and St. Michael's Mount, off the coast of Cornwall, bear the same name is because the latter was once a dependency of the monastery which crowned the former.

THE air is so clear in the Arctic regions that conversation can be carried on easily by persons two miles apart. It has also been asserted on good authority that at Gibraltar the human voice has been distinctly heard at a distance of ten miles.

A RECENTLY-PATENTED device for telephones consists of attaching the receiving-cord to the switch-lever in such a manner as to throw the telephone out of circuit when the receiver hangs suspended, and throw it in circuit and give a signal at the central office as soon as the receiver is raised for use.

A NATURALIST says that in captivity elephants always stand up when they sleep, but when in the jungle, their own land and home, they lie down. The reason given for the difference between the elephant in captivity and freedom is that the elephant never acquires complete confidence in his keepers, and always longs for liberty.

ITALIAN and Spanish women are distinguished above all others of Europe for their profound ignorance, due to their incurable indolence. They do not possess even the art of elegance of dress, and while the Spaniard has her artful fan and mantilla to delude people into believing she is artistic, the Italian has nothing but her chance beauty.

THE natives of Gibraltar, and also the Moors across the Strait, have a tradition that somewhere on the rock there exists a cavern whence a subterranean passage leads under the Strait to the mountains on the other side. The existence of this passage, they say, is known to the monkeys, who regularly use it in passing from one continent to the other.

THE Treasury authorities have just received from the Chief Constable of Buckinghamshire a remarkable collection of coins, which were recently discovered at the village of Whiteschurch, through the falling of a ceiling in an old house. They are all silver coins, and number twenty-eight, belonging entirely to the period covered by the reign of Elizabeth, James I., and Charles I. The bulk of them are in an excellent state of preservation. The oldest date decipherable is 1565.

NOTICES TO CORRESPONDENTS.

PHIL.—It cannot properly be called a clay.
W. G.—There is no truth in the statement.
MAGNET.—He can require you to apply for it.
MAIRIE.—Such recommendations are never given.
A. B. C.—A week's notice appears to be sufficient.
HAPPY-GO-LUCKY.—Inquire at Inland Revenue Office.
DIFFICULTY.—You had better show it to a lawyer at once.
LITTLE BILLIE.—"German Emperor" is the correct title.
RAMON.—The finest come from Malaga and Valencia, in Spain.
TIM.—It is a matter for arrangement between buyer and seller.
REGULAR READER.—It is pronounced as if written "Revor."
NETTA.—To clean an iron rub it over some powdered bathbrick.
T. P.—There is only one way; keep on applying until you succeed.
PAUL.—Impossible for any other than a professional to clean a felt hat.
CANNON.—We should think it is from the action of the brunes it comes.
UNCLE JO.—The money must be divided equally among the three sons.
JERO.—Ecuador means "equator," an allusion to its geographical position.
IS A FIK.—You had better try and come to some arrangement with him.
FIRST COUSIN.—Marriage between cousins is perfectly legal, but not advisable.
PROPERTY.—There is no objection to making such presents if one chooses.
ACROSS THE SEA.—The British time is five hours in advance of New York time.
JOAN.—We cannot tell you to what extent they were actually in use fifty years ago.
JERRY.—The most effectual way, and probably the cheapest, would be to advertise.
INQUIRE.—Obtain legal advice; the question is far too intricate to be dealt with here.
N. A.—No two clocks can be made to keep time exactly alike and strike simultaneously.
THOUGHTFUL READER.—Go to an eye hospital at once, where you will receive proper attention.
DIANA.—Probably a careful sponging with ammonia and water would remove the appearance.
Y. Y.—You cannot legally transfer your goods to your wife unless you are free from debt at the time.
DIAMOND JUBILEE.—A Jubilee shilling is just worth its face value; the crass for coins has died out.
BARTISHER.—The part of North America which comes nearest to Britain in climate is British Columbia.
OTHELLO.—Curiosities have no particular value. They are just worth what the owner can get for them, and no more.
BEST MAN.—Merely to attend him throughout the ceremony, and perform any little friendly offices he may require of you.
COPPER.—You had better write to Somerset House, London, giving dates and district, when full information will be forwarded on.
TOTTY.—Small pieces of raw potato in a little water shaken vigorously inside bottles and lamp-chimneys will clean them admirably.
S. L. P.—If from rubbing on a greasy surface, sponge with warm water, in which a little powdered borax has been dissolved.
MIKADO.—The term mikado is used to designate the Emperor of Japan. The real governing power resides in the supreme council.
BRIDEGROOM.—If the bride's parents are not in a position to pay for the carriage then the bridegroom must bear the expense.
USA.—Letho was the name of a river the waters of which possessed the quality of making those who drank of them forget the events of their past lives.
GOWK.—There are no set phrases for congratulation. The heartiest expressions of good will, those that come from the deepest feeling, are rarely studied.
MARCH HARE.—Gales occurring at the end of March are always called equinoctial, but as matter of fact it is not at all imperative that gales should blow then; popular delusion.
AMATEUR.—There are "diamond dyes" and others sold by chemists, with instructions on each packet for those who care to venture the job, and you may try your luck with these if you like.
SWEETIE.—Mix together a teaspoon of ground rice, one pound and a half of flour, and three-quarters of a cup of powdered sugar. Into these ingredients rub four ounces of butter, and mix all into dough with one egg. Flavour with lemon.

VENTILATION.—In a close room which has no ventilation, the air, by being breathed over and over again, becomes tainted, and when taken into the lungs does not contain the elements necessary to the creation of pure blood.

CANNIE SCOT.—A person who has been discharged upon a verdict of not proven is as free as if he had been found not guilty; he cannot be brought up again for same crime, no matter what new evidence may be found against him.

AMOR.—Go over your floor cloth with a soapy flannel to take off the dirt, dry thoroughly, and then rub up with a dry flannel cloth; the polish will be in proportion to the amount of elbow grease you put into the operation.

WILD ROSE.—The face should be washed every day in tepid water, and dried with a very soft linen cloth. Nothing is more injurious to a delicate skin than the rubbing and scratching with coarse towels which some people think is needful.

NITA.—Colouring cotton materials is quite different from the method employed for woollens. The rough and ready receipt has often been employed with a certain homely success upon green woollen things, but it depends much on what the previous dye, as well as the material is.

P. R. M.—Powdered fuller's earth, chalk, or plaster of paris, whichever you please, are often sprinkled over, left on for a time, then rubbed off, and fresh put on till you get rid of the grease. If you like you can mix camphor, musk, otto of roses, &c., with the powder each time or hang in a current of air.

CONVALESCENCE.

Awake, sad world, for Spring has come
 With song and laughter sweet;
 The billowy meadows break in foam
 Of flowers about her feet.

Here where I sit, alone, apart,
 I hear her voice again,
 The slow blood stirs about my heart
 And moves in every vein.

She bids me rise and follow her,
 Light foot and heart of song;
 Ah! how my feeble pulses stir
 That lifeless lay so long!

I come, I come, my foot is light,
 My heart beats strong once more;
 Sweet Spring, I follow hard thy flight
 By mountain, stream, and shore.

The lark sings sweeter overhead
 Than e'er before he sung,
 And I, who thought that youth was fled
 Forever, I am young.

O rapture of the bounding blood!
 O joy of ear and eye!
 My life comes like a roaring flood
 When I had thought to die.

And never was the world so sweet,
 And never Spring so fair,
 The primrose shining at her feet,
 The stars among her hair.

The bright birds hail in every tree
 Her banners green unfurled;
 To live is joy enough for me
 In such a sunlit world.

WEAKLING.—Eat wholesome sustaining food, of which oatmeal porridge and milk is about the very best; take moderate, never violent, exercise, and do not use stimulants in any form; go to bed early, rise with the lark, and then you may expect to develop health and strength.

MARTHA.—An easy and effective mode of ventilation can be arranged with a piece of wood cut a little smaller than the width of the window frame, and about six inches high. Insert this at the bottom of the frame and shut the window down on the wood. A steady ventilating process will go on from the centre of the windows.

M. C.—Dissolve some common soda in warm water, shred into it some scraps of yellow soap, and boil till the soap is all melted. Then take it from the fire, and when cool, add a little turpentine and sufficient rottenstone to make a stiff paste. Keep it in a tin box from the air, and if it get hard, cut off a little, and moisten it with water when you want to use it.

MOODY.—It is not wise to be envious of the prosperity of others. You may regret that you are debarred from entering the society you covet, but moodiness will not help you to reach it. Besides, those you refer to may not be at heart as happy as yourself. Remember, if we knew all, many a one who now excites our envy would instead share our pity.

COOKER.—Cellarolee of potatoes is a pretty dish made by boiling and mashing two pounds of potatoes. While mashing it work into it, beating to make very light, pepper, salt, butter, cream and yolk of an egg. Let it stand over the fire a few minutes to dry, then work into a mound with hollow in centre. Glaze the sides with egg and fill the hollow with minced meat, fish orysters in a thick cream.

NETTIE.—It is a popular idea that the use of acids will cause people to grow thin. Physicians declare that when this effect is produced there is something wrong, that the acid is in some way interfering with the proper assimilation of food. There have been very many experiments tried on weight reduction, but with indifferent success. Persons who have tried for years to decrease their weight have made a failure of it. Others have succeeded by means of measures that have destroyed their health. If you are well, be thankful, and try to keep the health and strength with which you are favoured, even though you must take a superabundance of flesh with it.

DOES YOUR HEAD ACHE?

"KAPUTINE" cures instantly.

Enclose stamped addressed envelope to "K." KAPUTINE, LTD., HUDDERSFIELD, for free samples, with name of nearest agent.

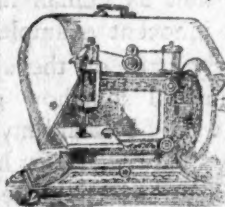
KEATING'S POWDER

DESTROYS BUGS, FLEAS, MOTHS, BEETLES

TINS 3^d 6^d & 1^s

SWIFT SEWING MACHINE.

WHY PAY MORE? 14/6 WHY PAY MORE?



Every Machine warranted. This newly-invented machine (The Swift) is the wonder of the age, and a marvel of mechanism in producing a thoroughly reliable Family Sewing Machine, suitable for Dressmaking and all kinds of Family Sewing equally as well as those costing 4 guineas. Easy instruction-book and complete set of accessories for 1s. 6d. with handsome cover, 3s. extra. Write at once for illustrated circular, or call and see the machine at work. Sent to any address, securely packed in strong wood case, upon receipt of post-office order. Extra needles 6d. and 1s. per packet.

Address, H. LEIGH and CRAWFORD, 31, Brooke Street, Holborn, London, E.C.

"DRUNKENNESS"

CURED. A lady having cured her husband secretly of intemperance has kindly and particularly of the remedy to anyone for forwarding stamped envelope.—Write privately: Mrs. L. B. BARNES, 4, Featherstone Buildings, London, W.C. Powders are useless.

AN HONEST MEDICINE.

DR. DAVIS'S FAMOUS FEMALE PILLS.
 THE MOST EFFECTUAL ON EARTH.
 NO IRREGULARITY CAN RESIST THEM.

6d., 1s. 1d., 2s. 6d., 4s. 6d.; extra strong, 11s. Sent free from observation by

Dr. Davis, 309, Portobello Road, London, W., or order of any chemist.

Dr. Davis's little book for MARRIED WOMEN most valuable, sent free on receipt of a stamped addressed envelope.

THE LONDON READER can be sent to any part of the world, post-free, Three-halppence weekly or Quarterly. One Shilling and Eightpence. The yearly subscription for the Monthly Part, including Christmas Part, is Eight Shillings and Eightpence, post-free.

ALL BACK NUMBERS, PARTS and VOLUMES are in print, and may be had of all Booksellers.

NOTICE.—Part 481, Now Ready, price Sixpence, post-free, Eightpence. Also Vol. LXVIII, bound in cloth, 4s. 6d.

THE INDEX to Vol. LXVIII, is Now Ready; Price One Penny, post-free, Three-halppence.

ALL LETTERS to be ADDRESSED TO THE EDITOR OF THE LONDON READER, 26, Catherine Street, Strand, W.C.

We cannot undertake to return rejected manuscripts.

WHY DID HE KILL HIM?

"No, no, I tell you; it's no use asking me questions. I don't know how I came to kill my brother. We had always been pretty good friends. This was the first real quarrel we ever had. We were neither of us in good humour that day, but that was nothing in itself. But then he began to talk about a trifle of money I owed him. He didn't need it, and I could have paid it out of hand. But I got mad and wouldn't; then he nagged me about it, and about some other things—all trifles. Then something rushed over me like a hot wave, and when it was gone my brother lay dead on the floor and I was under arrest for murdering him. What made it? How did it come about? God only knows. To me it seems like a nightmare. I'm sure, *I'm sure* it can't be true."

So a young man talked to me in a prison lately. Is there a lesson in it? Yes! a lesson as old and as new as human nature. Take a simple and an innocent example:—

"In the early part of the spring of 1891," writes a woman, "I somehow got into a low, weak, languid way. I found myself without my natural energy, yet where it had gone I had no idea. The least exertion tired and exhausted me. My appetite was poor, and after eating I had pain at the stomach and chest and an uncomfortable feeling all over."

"I lost my strength and grew low-spirited and dejected. I took no interest in anything and was irritable and easily put out. My sleep was bad, and when I got up in the morning it seemed to me as though I must have been awake all night—so tired and aching I was."

"I took medicines and medicines, but they didn't go to the spot any of them. So matters went on with me until May, 1891, when I began to suffer from rheumatism. It attacked my muscles at first so I could neither stoop nor stand upright. Then I had pain and stiffness in the legs; and from that it gradually spread all over me. My knees swelled up and I was unable to walk. And then the agony of it! I have no words to describe it. Night and day it tormented me. By-and-by it was all I could

do to dress and undress myself, and I had to be helped up and down stairs.

"Yes, and I had even to be helped on to the couch where I passed most of the time. In a few weeks I had been changed into a cripple. Who would have thought it possible? My bones ached to that degree it was a torture to move, and almost as bad to lie still. In this way I dragged through two painful and miserable years. All this time I had the best medical treatment, but all the remedies and embrocations were no good to me.

"The doctor said it might be well to try a change of air, and I went to Leverstone, in Hampshire, and stayed there a month. But no good came of it, and I returned home. My husband, and all who saw me, thought I should never be rid of the rheumatism as long as I lived. But I am rid of it, and this is the way it happened.

"In July, 1893, a book was sent to my house, telling of a medicine called Mother Seigel's Curative Syrup and the wonderful cures it had wrought. Many of these were of rheumatism, just like mine. This heartened me up, and I got the Syrup from Mr. W. Field, the chemist in Rotherfield. In a short time I found some relief, and by persevering in taking the Syrup, little by little the pain abated and all the soreness and weakness. To-day I am strong and well as ever. That is a year and a half ago, and I have not had any rheumatism since. You are welcome to publish what I have said and refer inquirers to me. (Signed) (Mrs.) Elizabeth Moon, wife of Leonard Moon, builder and plumber, Rotherfield, Sussex, July 30th, 1895."

I may simply mention that these good people are well known and respected in Rotherfield, and what Mrs. Moon has said is there known to be true. Now let the reader get one of those little books she speaks of and learn why and how Mother Seigel's Syrup cures rheumatism. Any chemist will give her one without cost. As to why that poor man killed his brother I shan't try to explain here. It goes to the bottom of the mystery of evil. What a pregnant word is the word "*somehow*."